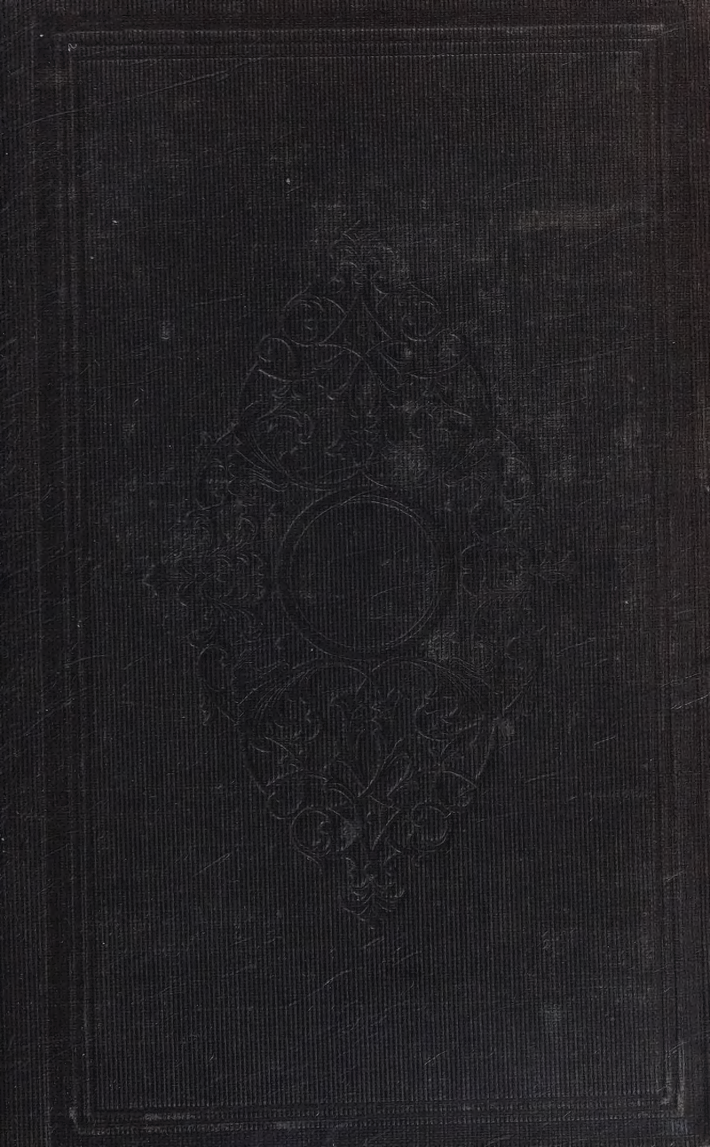

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A

TREATISE ON PRAYER;

DESIGNED TO ASSIST IN THE

DEVOUT DISCHARGE OF THAT DUTY

BY THE

REV. EDWARD BICKERSTETH,

ASSISTANT MINISTER OF WHELER CHAPEL.

Thy prayers and thine alms have come up for a memorial before God.
Acts x. 4

NEW YORK:
ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,
No. 285 BROADWAY.

1852.

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PREFACE.

THE acceptance which it has pleased God to give to the "*Scripture Help*," and the testimonies which the writer has received of benefit derived from that work, have induced him to endeavor to call the attention of Christians, and particularly the young, (for whom he wishes to be considered as especially writing) to another most important means of grace.

It seemed also peculiarly needful to press the duty of prayer now; for it appears to the writer to be one of the dangers of the present reviving state of the Church, that men gain knowledge without corresponding feelings; they are tempted to make a profession of religion, and talk about it, while, it is to be feared, the more retired and all-important duties of devout prayer, meditation, self-examination, and reading the Scriptures, are neglected.

He has felt a personal advantage in his former Treatise, from its imposing on him an additional obligation to the study of the Word of God. He hopes for a similar benefit in the present publication.

His various public engagements have indeed left him little leisure for a work of such importance; but it appeared to him better to do good, even though it be done in an imperfect manner, than not to do it at all.

In a treatise on that which has so often engaged the attention of Christian writers, new sentiments can neither be desired nor expected. The direction—"ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls," is well applicable here. The writer willingly availed himself of the ideas suggested by any former author.

He would, however, observe, that it is not the knowledge of the duty, but the grace of prayer which is the great thing that we should desire to attain. He has often had

occasion, in the course of his writing this book, to feel that it is much easier to know how to pray, than really to pray. The grace of prayer is a divine gift of far more importance than the mere knowledge of all parts of this duty, or the ability to perform it before man.

If some are disposed to think, that he has in any instance set the standard of devotion too high, he would say, that he has endeavored to follow the Scriptures; and though he feels that this necessarily often condemns both himself and Christians in general, it appeared his duty not to lower the standard on that account, but rather to explain it, and press it the more, that the perfection of the rule might lead himself and his readers more simply to the Savior for pardon, peace, and strength. Some may, indeed, on the other hand, think, that by not setting the standard high enough, he has often proved his own want of devotional feeling. He is ready here to submit to those of more experience in the Christian life.

It would have been easy to have enlarged many parts; but the object was to bring forward only the most obvious and useful observations that occurred.

Though prayer is that duty which especially declares the guilt and weakness of man, and the grace and power of God; yet there is danger in pressing any positive duty, and particularly that of prayer, lest we should in any measure foster and encourage that self-righteousness which is so natural to the human mind. The writer has endeavored to guard against this evil. Without prayer, indeed, no man possesses spiritual life; yet we are not saved by our prayers; the ability to pray is rather a part of that salvation which Jesus Christ has obtained for us.

It may be thought by some, that parts of this work are little more than a collection or bringing together of texts of Scripture. This will not, it is presumed, be an objection to the majority of his readers; and it may be said, if it need an excuse, that the author felt, that when he could quote

a passage of Scripture in support of any sentiment, he then knew that he was on secure ground. The Scriptures are also very full on this subject; so that an arrangement of those passages which relate only to prayer, would form no inconsiderable volume.

The congregation attending in the afternoon at Wheler Chapel, Spital Fields, will remember the leading outline of a considerable part of the following Treatise, as coming in the course of sermons which the author preached to them on the subject of prayer. He now affectionately submits to their attention, in a more enlarged state from the press, those motives and directions for this duty which he delivered to them from the pulpit.

The author ventures to suggest to heads of families, that parts of this work might furnish suitable reading for family instruction on Sundays.

If the reader should obtain any benefit from this work, and be excited to pray more constantly and devoutly, the writer would earnestly ask an interest in those prayers, that he himself may live in the practice of that duty which he has been endeavoring to teach others. May every reader also join him in entreating the Author and Giver of every good gift, to grant his blessing to this attempt to induce others to pray more continually and more fervently; to aim at living in abiding communion with the Father of Spirits.

Salisbury Square, Nov. 18*th*, 1819.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE TENTH EDITION.

In preparing this Edition for the press, the Author has endeavored to avail himself of some valuable hints given in a recent review of this work, and has introduced some additions there suggested.

Islington, Oct. 7, 1825.

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A

TREATISE ON PRAYER.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE NATURE AND THE DUTY OF PRAYER

Men in general think it an honor to be admitted into the company of those who are distinguished by their rank, their power, or their attainments. They feel it a privilege to converse with a man of the first consequence in the state, a man eminent in wisdom or knowledge, or the monarch of a mighty empire. A Christian justly reckons it no small privilege to be permitted for a season, to associate with a person of peculiar piety. And if, while the greatest good may be obtained from a distinguished person, there be only a limited time in which we can go to him, the importance of using an opportunity that is offered, is evidently greatly increased. If we can say "now the way of access is open, but it will soon be closed; now you may hold converse, and get intimately acquainted with him; you may obtain all you want; you may secure a lasting interest in his affections; he has invited you to come to him, and you will never have this privilege offered again: surely, no other argument need be urged, to induce a man wanting his help to go to him, without delay."

When the Lord of Glory dwelt on earth, we often read of the great multitudes who assembled together and crowded around him, to see and to hear him. On one occasion, we find even a rich man, Zaccheus, unable to approach him, and climbing a tree to have a transient glimpse at so remarkable a character. Had we lived at that time, and possessed any thing of our present knowledge, we should doubtless have thought it a high honor to be in his company, and, like Mary, sit at the feet of Jesus, and hear his words.

This privilege was counted the more valuable in seasons of difficulty. When any were in sickness, or danger, and

believed that if they could see our Lord he would help them, they then desired his presence with peculiar earnestness. When Lazarus is dying, then his sisters send a special message to their Lord. When the disciples are in the storm, they awaken him, saying, "Carest thou not that we perish?" When the people are sick, they break through the roof of a dwelling to come to him; or press through the crowd to touch the hem of his garment.

It is the *nature* of prayer, that it gives to needy and sinful men, in the limited time of this life, every day, yes, every hour, this great privilege of access to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, to the Most High and the Most Holy, and this with the utmost freedom and confidence; the access not merely of a servant to a master; or a subject to a king: but of a child to a tender parent.

Prayer is, then, a holy intercourse with God.—"It is," as the martyr Bradford expresses it, "a simple, unfeigned, humble, and ardent offering of the heart before God, wherein we either ask things needful, or give thanks for benefits received." Acceptable prayer is the desire of the heart offered up to God through the influence of his Spirit, in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, for things according to his will, and in confidence that he hears us, and will answer us. There is no prayer without the exercise of holy and suitable dispositions and affections. "The true worshippers," says our Lord, "shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him."*

Prayer is not the mere posture of the body.—A man may kneel till he wear out the stones; like the Mahomedans, he may put himself into every variety of posture, throw himself on the earth and lie in the dust; like Ahab, he may put on sackcloth and ashes; or, like the monks of modern times, kneel till his knees become horny, and yet never pray at all.

It is not the mere expression of the mouth.—A man may repeat a hundred times in a day that comprehensive and affecting prayer which our Lord has taught us to use; or he may *say*, "My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth after thee," and yet not offer up one prayer unto God.

It is not the mere invention of the mind.—Many have a

* John, iv. 23.

peculiar gift of prayer in this respect, and can pour out fluently, perspicuously, and at length, a form of words; but, both the mind and the tongue may be thus employed, while the heart neither feels the sentiments expressed, nor longs for the blessings implored.

Nor is the mere act of joining in family, social, or public worship, acceptable prayer. Uniting with others, in the most earnest petitions, where your own heart is unmoved, will avail you nothing.

All these things may be as the mere husk and shell without the kernel; the body without the spirit. God expects the desire of the heart. Your devotions should be a sacred bond knitting the soul unto God, a holy converse with him.

Dr. Watts thus expresses himself on this subject:—"When a holy soul comes before God, he has much more to say than merely to beg. He tells his God what a sense he has of the divine attributes; and what high esteem he pays to his majesty, his wisdom, his power, and his mercy. He talks with him about the works of creation, and stands wrapt up in wonder. He talks about the grace and mystery of redemption, and is yet more filled with admiration and joy. He talks of all the affairs of nature, grace, and glory. He speaks of his works of providence, of love, and vengeance, in this and the future world. Infinite and glorious are the subjects of this holy communion between God and his saints."

Mrs. More observes, "Prayer is a term of great latitude, involving the whole compass of our intercourse with God. St. Paul represents it to include our adoration of his perfections; our acknowledgment of the wisdom of his dispensations, and of our obligations for his benefits, providential and spiritual; the avowal of our entire dependence on him, and of our absolute subjection to him; the declaration of our faith in him; the expression of our devotedness to him; the confession of our own unworthiness, infirmities and sins; the petition for the supply of our wants, and for the pardon of our offences, for succor in our distress, for a blessing on our undertakings, for the direction of our conduct, and the success of our affairs."*

"Prayer," says the same writer, "is the application of

* See Essay on St. Paul, vol. ii. p. 227

want to Him who only can relieve it; the voice of sin to him who only can pardon it. It is the urgency of poverty, the prostration of humility, the fervency of penitence, the confidence of truth. It is not eloquence, but earnestness; not the definition of helplessness, but the feeling of it; not figures of speech, but compunction of soul. It is the 'Lord save us, we perish,' of drowning Peter; the cry of faith to the ear of mercy."*

This is acceptable prayer. But how often are our devotions a mere form to satisfy our conscience! We know it is our duty to pray; we know that none go to heaven but men of prayer; we have been taught to pray in our youth, and therefore we go through the outward form; but is it not too often without the inward motion and desire of the heart towards God? Let us remember, that the mere form is not only unprofitable to the soul, but brings guilt upon it; and when trusted in, is a dangerous delusion. It may gain us a religious name in the world; it may pacify an alarmed conscience for the moment; but it gains nothing from God. Our Lord says, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me;" and what follows?—"in vain do they worship me."†

From this description of the nature of prayer, it must be obvious, that with the gift of "the spirit of grace and supplications," two things are essentially necessary to enable us really to pray.

1. *The knowledge of our wants.*—As the needy only will stoop to ask for alms, so a real, deep, and abiding sense of our indigence, is the first spring of a true and earnest desire to obtain help from God. The prodigal son thought not of returning to his father, till reduced to wretchedness and misery. When David says, "I am poor and needy," he then earnestly prays, "Make haste unto me, O God, thou art my help and my deliverer."‡ While we think we can help ourselves, and get through our difficulties by our own means, we are little disposed to pray to God. The Laodicean church could not be much in the spirit of real prayer, however it might abound in the outward form, when our Lord had to say of it, "Thou sayest,

* See Practical Piety, vol. i. p. 102. † Matth. xv. 8.
‡ Ps. lxx. 5.

I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Come to the throne of grace to get, and not to give. Bring your wants, and not your fullness. And if you have no feeling of your spiritual poverty and necessity, let your first prayer be for this feeling.

2. *Faith in the being and goodness of God.*—The prodigal thought of his father's riches and bounty, and then returned to him. "He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him."* He who has not a scriptural knowledge of God, or who thinks him a hard and austere master, will never feel disposed rightly to approach him. It is faith, the gift of God, realizing the views given us in the Bible of the immensity, power, wisdom, all-sufficiency and goodness of God, of his being ever present, and of the way of access by Jesus Christ, which excites the heart to draw near to him in full confidence that he hears us, and loves us, and will help us. And what duty can be more delightful than thus to come to God as an almighty, compassionate, and reconciled Father in Christ Jesus, in the full conviction that he loves us, and, because he loves us, will deny us nothing that is for our good?

The nature of prayer is, however, better known by experience than by any description. One who had just begun to be in earnest about religion said, "I was most affected with the difference which I found in my prayers. I had never thought of doing any thing more than outwardly repeating a form; but I was surprised to find how God enabled me, in my private devotions, earnestly to ask, in the name of his Son, those mercies which I needed, and really to desire those things which I had before only formally expressed."

Many arguments might be urged to show the *duty of prayer;* but we will confine ourselves to some plain ones.

Prayer is *a natural and reasonable act for human beings.* The first feeling of the mind, and the natural expression of that feeling in any sudden and alarming emergency and distress, is an act of prayer to God. Jonah i. 5, 6. It is natural and reasonable, for man is not an inde-

*Heb. xi. 6.

pendent being; he is created by another, and he is altogether dependent on his Creator. It is our truest wisdom to know, and our best interest to act upon this truth. It is our highest happiness to delight in him, by whose skill, power, and love, we have every faculty given, and continued to us. Prayer is the simplest and plainest expression of dependence, and the most obvious way of obtaining help from God our Creator. Hence men in all ages and in all nations, have in one way or other offered up prayer.

Prayer is *an act of homage justly due from us, to the great Governor of all.* We thereby adore him, who only has a right to our adoration. It is a special part of that honor and service to which he has every possible claim. He ought to be acknowledged as the Author and Giver of every good gift. Thereby we glorify his wisdom, as knowing all things, his power, as able to extricate us from every difficulty, his goodness, as willing to assist us, his all-sufficiency, to meet every want, his mercy, as pitying our misery, and his forbearance, in pardoning all our sins. In short, what attribute of God does not prayer acknowledge and honor, and how manifestly does it tend to maintain a constant, and lively, and general impression of his supreme excellence and glory!

God has expressly commanded us to pray to him. Our Lord says, "Ask, and it shall be given you."* He declares, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."† St. Paul exhorts, "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands."‡ Testimonies to this effect might be multiplied.§ The great God, then, that made heaven and earth, and before whom you will stand in judgment, plainly requires you to worship him.

The relations by which God has revealed himself to us show this duty. He is a Father, and gives us "the spirit of adoption, to cry, Abba, Father." Children should thus go to their father to ask of him a supply of their wants, and to tell him all that they feel and enjoy. Jesus Christ is the way of access to God; a Mediator to interpose in our behalf, and a High Priest and Intercessor to offer up our supplications: the Holy Spirit also assists our prayers,

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* Matt. vii. 7. † Luke xviii. 1. ‡ 1 Tim. ii. 8.

§ See Eph. vi. 18; Phil. iv. 6; Rom xii. 12; Col. iv. 2; Matt. xxvi. 41 &c. &c.

making intercession for us. These relations are specially revealed for our use, and are mainly important with reference to prayer. A peculiar title therefore given to God is, "O thou that hearest prayer."*

There are severe threatenings against those who neglect this duty. The Psalmist says, "Pour out thy wrath upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name."† Daniel (ix. 13, 14,) ascribes the evil that came on the Jews to their neglect of prayer. Those who were to be cut off, "who turned back from the Lord, and those that have not sought the Lord."‡ It is the character given of the wicked, "who are far from God,"§ that they "call not upon the Lord;"‖ and of the hypocrite, that "he will not always call upon God."¶ He may, perhaps, in a time of trouble, seek God's help; but he neglects it as his daily duty.

The duty of prayer may be farther proved from *the practice of holy persons.* I need not do more than enumerate those of old. Abraham, (Gen. xviii. 22—32; xxi. 33;) Isaac, (Gen. xxiv. 63;) Jacob, (Gen. xxxii. 24, 28;) Hosea, (xii. 3, 4;) Moses, (Exod. xxxiv. 28;) Jabez, (1 Chron. iv. 10;) David, (Ps. lv. 16, 17;) Elijah, (James v. 17; Daniel, (ch. vi. 10:) Paul, (Acts ix. 11; Rom. i. 9; Eph. i. 15, 16; Phil. i. 3, 4; 2 Tim. i. 3;) Peter, (Acts x. 9;) with many others: or those holy women, Rebecca, (Gen. xxv. 22;) Hannah, (1 Sam. i. 13, 14;) Anna, (Luke ii. 38;) and others, to show that they lived in prayer. And why is their devotion recorded? not for their glory, but as examples for us. The man of much prayer resembles those Patriarchs of old, who "walked with God," and has something of their privileges, to whom God manifested himself in the flesh, and with whom he conversed on earth. Not to dwell on these, let us look to our Lord himself, whose example is especially set before us to be followed. Few parts of his character are more plainly exhibited, than his constant regard of this duty. The reader is referred to the following passages: Matt. xiv. 23; Mark i. 35; vi. 46; Luke v. 16, 26; vi. 12; xxii. 39—45; Heb. v. 7; vii. 25.

Prayer is *also an indispensable means to be used in order to obtain spiritual blessings.* The good things of

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*Ps. lxv. 2. †Ps. lxxix. 6 ‡Zeph. i. 6.
§Ps. lxxiii. 27. ‖Ps xiv. 4. ¶Job. xxvii. 10

this life are given indeed indiscriminately to good or bad men: God thus showing how little value we ought to set on those things which the wicked often abundantly possess. But grace and pardon, mercy and salvation, are promised expressly to those who pray. "If thou shalt pray unto God, he shall be favorable unto thee."* "Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all that call upon thee."† No excellencies can compensate for the want of prayer. In fact, it lies at the root of the real benefit of all the other gifts of God to man.

But religion is in a low state in the heart of that man on whom prayer must be urged as a duty. It ought ever to be considered as the greatest of all mercies that we are permitted to pray to God, and assured that "every one that asketh receiveth." We shall, therefore, in the following chapter, consider prayer rather as a privilege than as a duty.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER.

"THE true happiness of every Christian," says Bishop Wilkins, "does properly consist in his spiritual communion with God." Prayer is, then, a necessary part of the Christian's happiness, for it brings him into the presence of God, and is the most direct act of communion with him.

Every one that prays aright, can adopt David's expression, "It is good for me to draw near to God." It is pleasant, it is honorable, it is advantageous. If I have riches, they may or may not be good for me. If I have human knowledge, power, eloquence, talent, and earthly glory, or any of the good things of this life, they may or may not be good for me: but if I have the grace of prayer, the heart to draw near to God, it is unmixed, unqualified good. It is certainly and unquestionably good for me.

Consider some of the *advantages* of prayer.

Prayer is *the means which God has appointed for you*

* Job. xxxiii. 26. † Ps. lxxxvi. 5.

to obtain every good, and to escape every evil.—It has pleased him to appoint this means for various wise and holy purposes; and especially that we may acknowledge and glorify his attributes; that we may see our dependence on him, and prove our obedience to him. There is no evil that you may now suffer, or that you may expect to suffer, which prayer is not the appointed means to alleviate or avert. Our Lord declares, "Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Greater blessings than we can think of may thus be obtained. "Call upon me, and I will answer thee, and will show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not. Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel!"

We are certain of obtaining what we ask in faith, according to God's will.—The numerous promises made to faithful prayer fully confirm this remark. He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think."* You may labor for riches, and lay by money year after year, and after every care your money may be lost, and you die poor; or it may bring you trouble and sorrow, rather than any advantage. You may pursue the pleasures or favor of the world, and live miserable and die despised. But if you seek the blessings of God in fervent prayer, you cannot be disappointed. This has been the testimony of every servant of God from the beginning. How differently men reason about earthly and spiritual things! If a great, and faithful, and gracious monarch were to promise riches, pleasures, or honors, to those who come to him, his court would soon be crowded; men would anxiously ask, "what has he promised? how may I go to him?" But God himself has earnestly invited us to come to him, has promised to supply all our wants, and to give us durable riches and righteousness. It is the solemn declaration of Jesus Christ to his disciples, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." You may not indeed obtain the first time you ask; the promise gives no assurance that you shall. St. Paul had "a thorn in the flesh," and besought the Lord thrice, or frequently, before he was heard. You may not

* Eph. iii. 20.

obtain the very thing which you ask; but asking aright, you will obtain that which will fully satisfy the spiritual mind.* St. Paul's thorn in the flesh was not removed, but he was enabled to take pleasure in his infirmities. No prayers offered up aright will ever be made in vain.

The privilege of prayer was *purchased for us at the costly price of the blood of Jesus Christ*,† and therefore we may easily imagine what a great and vast advantage it must be, and how excellent is that liberty of access unto God which was thus obtained. Souls now in eternal ruin are not privileged to pray. They have irrecoverably lost this good. The fallen angels have no way of access to God. Jesus "took not on him the nature of angels." Shall we then slight or despise the distinguishing privilege of our present life?

Prayer is *a satisfactory evidence of our having obtained the saving grace of God.* "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."‡ It is the breath of the spiritual life in the soul.§ Whatever has life, must breathe; and if the life be strong, it will breathe freely. If prayer be faint, weak, and disordered, the person is not in full life and health; if there be no prayer, there is no spiritual life at all; the first mark of it is, "Behold, he prayeth:"‖ and the last account of one is his prayer, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."¶ It is to the spiritual Church the promise belongs—"I will pour upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication."** If you have a fervent persevering spirit of prayer, you have a sure evidence of being born again; of the life of God begun in your soul. When you can feel with David, "my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary:" then you may also say, with humble yet believing confidence, "O God, thou art my God."

Prayer gains for us spiritual strength.—It is that singular duty in which every grace is exercised, every sin opposed, every blessing obtained, the whole soul revived,

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* 1 John v. 14. 15; Rom. viii. 27, 28. † Eph. ii. 18; Heb. x. 19.
‡ Gal. iv. 6. § Lam. iii. 56. ‖ Acts ix. 11.
¶ Acts vii. 59. ** Zech. xii. 10.

strengthened, and invigorated for the Christian race. Just in proportion to your prayers, so is your holiness, so is your usefulness. The praying Christian is the strong, the thriving Christian, "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." As the naturally weak ivy, which, if it had no support, would only grovel on the earth, by adhering to some neighboring tree, or building, and entwining itself about it, thus grows and flourishes, and rises higher and higher; and the more the winds blow, and the tempests beat against it, the closer it adheres, and the nearer it clings, and the faster its fibres embrace that which supports it, and it remains uninjured: just so the Christian, naturally weak, by prayer connects himself with the Almighty; and the more dangers and difficulties beset him, the more closely they unite him to his God; he reaches towards, and leans upon, and clings to him, and is strengthened with divine strength. High is the privilege of prayer, which turns our very wants to our advantage, leading us by them into a constant intercourse with God, and keeping us in a spiritual and heavenly state of mind.

By prayer we obtain true peace of mind, that peace to which those who never pray are utter strangers.—This peace is a calm and entire resting upon God for the supply of every necessity, of body and soul, for time and for eternity. It is a casting all our burden, whatever it be, upon a kind, compassionate, Almighty friend, who willingly sustains it, and relieves and comforts us. "Casting all your care on him, for he careth for you." Let the Christian follow the Apostle's direction, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God," and he may fully expect the effect which that Apostle describes —"and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus." How calm and composed may he be, amid all the storms and distractions of this world, who has daily and hourly communion with the Creator, Ruler, and Preserver of all things! The Christian falls below his true happiness in this life, if he does not enjoy constant peace of mind. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee."*

* Isa. xxvi. 3.

Prayer is especially *advantageous in the time of trouble.* —Even those who neglect God altogether at other times, are often then compelled to apply to him, and even in such a case he has heard and accepted them.* But with a peculiarly filial confidence may those approach unto him, when they are in trouble, whose habit of mind, whose continual practice, whose whole life, is a drawing near to God. The command and the promise belong to them, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."† Indeed, what Christian has not found in his own experience, the truth of the declaration, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."‡ When no other ear could hear but his, no other arm save, no other power relieve or help; when we were destitute and almost in despair, then his ear heard, and through his mercy we were delivered. Prayer, like the precious metal, comes most pure from the heated furnace. Are you depressed under your guilt, your weakness your ignorance, or your ingratitude? You may spread your distress, as Hezekiah did his letter, before God, and you need not fear but that God will help you: and what a comfort it is that we can never come unseasonably to him! A great man or a friend may be so circumstanced that we cannot interrupt him, or he will soon be wearied by repeated application, or he may be so far off that we cannot get at him; but our God is ever nigh unto us—he is always with us; "a very present help in trouble." Other friends, if willing, may not be able to help us—but he has both the will and the power to give the greatest blessings. "Even our guilt, when confessed, becomes a plea for relief;‖ and the worst condition that can be, the strongest reason to pray; all that is given, being given, not for our merits, but for Christ's sake." The following affecting anecdote is told us of a poor negro woman. She was a poor slave in the West Indies, and was forbidden by her master to attend public worship, and threatened with severe punishment if she did go: the only reply she made, was, "I must tell the Lord that;" a reply that so affected her owner, that he no longer refused her liberty to go. What a view does this give us of the blessedness of prayer, that a poor and friendless outcast

* Isa. xxvi. 16; 1 Kings xxi. 29.
† Ps. l. 15.
‡ Ps. xlvi. 1.
‖ 1 John i. 9.

may thereby obtain the aid of the great Governor of the universe!

In prayer we *enjoy the presence of God.*—"Draw nigh to God," says St. James, "and he will draw nigh to you." The devout soul, having found in the solitude of the closet the presence of God, is glad to withdraw itself from the distraction of the world, and retire to hold converse with him in secret. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. When shall I come and appear before God?"* The Savior assured his disciples, "he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."† There is an experience, therefore, of this presence, into which only those who love Christ can enter. Jeremiah seems to feel the loss of it, when in so affecting a way he exclaims, "O thou hope of Israel, thou Savior thereof in the time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?"‡

Prayer *prepares us for the enjoyment of God hereafter.*—He who has had this heavenly intercourse on earth, and has here been able to say, "truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ," is prepared to enter into the blissful society above. God is not a stranger to him; he has long known him; his Savior is his tried and constant friend. And just as a man who has been continually experiencing the bounty and goodness of a friend whom he has never seen, will rejoice in beholding his face, so will it be to the devout believer. He will enter heaven with the conviction, "In thy presence is fullness of joy."

The devout believer, then, is the only *truly happy* man. What a delightful life does he live, whose prayers afford him constant communion with God! No fears and anxieties about future things need distract him, nor present difficulties and burdens weigh him down. He may calmly, steadily, and cheerfully pass through all the varieties of this life, living in the most exalted and yet endearing friendship with his Maker, having a constant support, and a hidden but solid joy from intercourse with him, possessing an ample resource in every circumstance here below, and an assured expectation of everlasting felicity with Him at whose right

* Ps. xlii. 1, 2. † John xiv. 21. ‡ Jer. xiv. 8.

hand "there are pleasures for evermore." Let the happiness of the life of devotion induce you diligently to seek divine grace, to enable you to say with David, "I give myself unto prayer."

These, and many other things which might be mentioned, are the advantages of prayer. But men err in two ways concerning this privilege: some wholly neglect their prayers, and some trust in them.

Some neglect prayer, and this on various grounds. They say, *God knows what I want without my asking*, and he is too wise and too good to need my information in order to relieve me. This should be an argument to raise your faith and hope, and not to hinder your prayers.* God is indeed wise, infinitely wise; and, being so wise, he has in his word directed you to make known your wants unto him by prayer. His knowledge is one reason why you *should* pray to him, and his goodness another, why you may confidently apply to him. Will you pretend to be wiser than he is? Whatever his design may be in it, your duty is clear—to obey his will. He knows when you will die, and might support you without food, and yet you daily eat. Remember that "it may be agreeable to perfect wisdom, to grant that to our prayers which it would not have been agreeable to the same wisdom to have given us without praying for." What if prayer be his plan for making you humble, dependent, devout, believing, and thankful? In short, for impressing you with a sense and feeling of your wants, and for bringing you to a proper state of mind to receive his blessing? But whatever his design may be, it is your highest wisdom and interest to follow his directions.

A similar objection is, that *God is unchangeable, and prayer will not alter nor reverse his purposes.*—We do not say that prayer really changes the purposes of God, though it may be sometimes so expressed in condescension to our infirmities: but we say his course of dealing is quite different with those who pray, and those who do not. We may think, indeed, that we are drawing God nearer to us, when we in truth draw nearer to him, as a person with a boat-hook which he fixes to the shore is ready to think when he draws the boat, that he is moving the land towards him, when in fact he himself is coming nearer to the land.

* Matt. vi. 8, 9.

But you quite mistake the true design of this perfection of God, if you think it should keep you from praying. The unchangeableness of God, so far from being an argument against prayer, is the reason why you should pray, and secure to yourself the fulfilment of his promises. What are the purposes of God? are they known, or secret? If *known*, as if he has threatened judgment, prayer may avert it. Look at the example of Nineveh, and see the effect of the Ninevites humbling themselves before God, though God had threatened, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed." Prayer arrests the judgment. Or, if he has made promises, it is still our duty to pray that they may be accomplished. When Daniel knew that the return of the Jews at a certain time was decreed of God, it only stirred him up to pray more earnestly for the blessing. You cannot tell what the *secret* purposes of God are; but you know that God has appointed prayer as the means of obtaining good and averting evil. If you neglect the means which he has directed you to use, you have no reason to expect the blessing which you desire: but if you are induced by his grace to use the means, it is a good sign that you are likely to obtain the desired end. Remember, then, that though there be "no variableness nor shadow of turning" with him, yet the means are ordained as well as the effect, and pray to gain that which God ordains to be obtained by prayer. Jesus Christ himself prayed, and commanded you to pray; and an excuse drawn from the unchangeableness of God will never avail you in answer to a plain command, sanctioned by such an example, and especially when there are such great and evident advantages in obtaining your desires through prayer.

Others say, *I cannot pray.* Indeed you cannot of yourself, and this is your guilt and your sin; but you may pray by the help of God, and I purpose to show how "to them that have no might God increaseth strength." But have you ever tried to pray? have you ever asked God to enable you to pray? Many children, when a hard lesson is given them, say to their teachers, I cannot learn it; yet by trying, and attending to the instructions they receive, the hardest lessons are mastered. So it will be with you as to prayer. Only try, remembering that God accepts the willing mind.*

* 2 Cor. viii. 12.

The greatest obstacle is not want of ability, but want of will. I know that the poor often say, I have no book of learning, and therefore cannot pray. And some are ignorant enough to suppose that only ministers of religion need pray. Had you no personal wants, then indeed you might more plausibly thus reason. But prayer must be the act of your own mind, of yourself individually. God requires you to pray. The prayer of your minister, your relatives and friends, does not make your own prayer unnecessary. Their prayers may be of use in obtaining for you grace to seek God more earnestly; but you cannot expect to obtain his mercy and blessing unless you yourself unfeignedly apply to the throne of grace. And as to ability to pray, it is a deep sense of your necessities that forms the great qualification for real prayer. Hence all persons, high and low, learned and unlearned, are by nature on a level in this respect. A beggar, feeling his poverty and wretchedness, does not want book-learning, to teach him how to come to ask your alms. He simply tells you his distress, points to his tattered garments, or his pallid or diseased body, and thus most effectually makes his way to your heart. And so, though you cannot read, you may still pray to God, and be accepted by him.

It is not an uncommon objection, *I am too much occupied to pray.* Prayer is very proper for those who have time, but I am so full of other engagements that I cannot attend to it.—You surely do not mean to say so! Time! cannot get time! how do you employ your time? Is none of it wasted in sinful pleasures or pursuits? Do you ever find leisure to talk about your children's or friend's good qualities? Do you never find opportunity to thank men for earthly favors? and have you not time to acknowledge God's goodness of which your lives are full? If you are afflicted, can you not find time to unbosom yourself to a friend, who yet perhaps can afford you no effectual help? and should you not tell your cares and sorrows to God, your best friend, who can deliver you from all your troubles? But you forget that devotion itself is the most important part of your business, the greatest work of your life. You have more to do with God than with the whole world. Prayer will obtain God's blessing on all you do. It will prepare you for a happy eternity. You are not lavishing away your time or misemploying it by prayer. It was a saying of Dr. Donne's

"that the only time he saved, or employed to the best purpose. he spent in piety and prayer, and in doing good." I answer your plea of business, by the experience of a devout man who said, "when I have hastened over the duties of God's worship, out of a too eager desire to follow my worldly business, I did many times meet with some secret cross in my affairs; whereas when I took my ordinary time, God did make my other business to succeed the better, or else my mind was brought to a quiet submission to the divine will." No business in the world brings such unspeakable gain as private prayer does. He that prays well will do all well besides.* What are you laboring for? the good things of this life? Remember, then, that devotion "procures," as Barrow observes, "wealth, inestimably precious, pleasure infinitely satisfactory, honor incomparably noble above all that this world can afford." Look at David, Daniel, and St. Paul, men the most constant in devotion, and yet incessantly engaged, and manifestly blessed, in their several stations.

Another man will tell us, *I find no benefit from prayer.* —I have prayed, and seem no better for it; nay, rather worse.—If you feel more of your guilt and sinfulness, that of itself is an advantage, and should bring you more to the Savior. This is a vain excuse. Shall the minister give up preaching because his congregation seem to receive no immediate benefit? Shall the husbandman, because the seed just sown in one part of the field has not directly sprung up, not sow the remainder of the field? Let this objection lead you not to neglect your prayers, but to examine their character. We know that true prayer is attended with the greatest benefits. One devout person would sometimes say to her friends, "I would not be hired out of my closet for a thousand worlds."

Some venture to say, "*I am too wicked to pray.*—The

* Fenelon, quoted by Sheppard, remarks, "We must reserve the needful hours for communing with God in prayer. Persons who are in considerable offices, have so many indispensable duties to fulfil. that scarcely any time remains to them for communion with God, except they strictly apply themselves to its regulation. It is necessary then to be firm in adopting and observing a rule. Our rigor in this may seem excessive: but without it all falls into confusion; we are dissipated and relaxed; we lose our strength; we are insensibly at a distance from God."

sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord." Is it my duty to pray while unregenerate? But he who thinks that he shall get rid of the duty of prayer on account of his wickedness, does not only confess, but aggravate his guilt and his condemnation. You must not, indeed, come with the same wicked mind with which you committed your sins: but go grieved and penitent; and the sooner you go the better. "The plowing of the wicked," all they do, "is sin;" and yet even a worldly man would not therefore justify them in being idle. Your neglect of prayer is perhaps the very cause of your wickedness. Begin to seek the grace of prayer, and God will give you grace to amend. It is your duty, though unregenerate, to pray, and to pray especially for a new heart. When God had promised the new heart and the new spirit to the Jews, he adds, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them."* Who more wicked than Simon Magus? and yet the apostle calls on him to repent and pray to God.† Your guilt should bring you to your Savior, and not keep you from him. Will not the sick man desire to see the Physician? Is keeping at a distance, and contemptuous and negligent conduct in an offender, as likely to gain the favor of him that is offended, as an humble and meek confession of fault, and entreaty for pardon? All the practice and conduct of a man, all your own experience, all the confessions of sin, and all the petitions for mercy which are recorded in the Bible, testify against such an idea. If your confession of wickedness be the real feeling of your heart, you see it is the very reason that you should immediately begin to meditate on your sad condition, to repent and seek God's mercy in prayer. But if it be not the feeling of your heart, this excuse for neglecting prayer needs no answer.

There are others who seem to think that all exhortations to prayer savor of *legality*. We are to be saved by believing, and not by working. But how gross is the mistake of such. We press it not as a mere task or a meritorious labor, but as a plain duty. We state it to be a privilege and a blessing bestowed on all the children of God. We are not, it is true, saved by our prayers, but by Christ; yet we shall never be saved without prayer, for the spirit of

* Ezek. xxxvi. 26. 37. † Acts, viii. 22.

prayer is a part of our salvation. Living in neglect of prayer, is a plain proof, whatever men's notions or fancies may be, whatever their doctrinal sentiments are, that they have none of the spirit of adoption, and so do not belong to Christ. Nay, a disregard of prayer shows that you have none of the real feelings of evangelical truth, which, working by love, ever influences the soul to seek the presence of him we love.

Is there not at the bottom of all these objections, a reason of this kind, *I dislike prayer*—It puts a restraint upon all my ways—It compels me to think of that which I had rather forget?—But what are you thus owning yourself to be? It is the character of the wicked, "God is not in all his thoughts;" they dislike to "retain God in their knowledge." Ah! remember, at one time or other, all flesh must come before God; he now sits on a throne of grace, where you may obtain mercy; he will hereafter sit on a throne of judgment, where he will for ever condemn those who have not sought and found "grace to help in time of need."

This neglect of prayer is the fault of many; but "there is a generation who are righteous in their own eyes," who *trust in their prayers.*—They reason, little as they think it, on the supposition that for every prayer they make, God is, as it were, so much in debt to them, and thus that by the multitude of their prayers they deserve heaven. This is a common but a strange mistake. What merit can there be in begging and seeking that, which if we obtain, lays us under increased obligations? Israel of old "followed after the law of righteousness," but did not attain it, "because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." Is this not too much your case? Be not mistaken; though prayer is good in its proper place, it is not good in the way of meriting any thing from God. It is not good in the way even of disposing God to give. He is ever ready to give abundantly unto us, "more ready to hear than we are to pray, and wont to give more than either we desire or deserve." But it is good, as it is pursuing the plan which God has appointed for obtaining his blessings;—it is good, as it is the way in which he bestows them. Renounce, then, your own righteousness; and thus humbly and believingly seek, and you shall find.

If you did but know the true character of your fancied righteousness, you would say with Isaiah, "all our right-

cousnesses are as filthy rags," as a rejected garment. You would enter into the feelings of the excellent Bishop Beveridge, who declares,* "I know not how it is with others, but for my own part I do not remember, neither do I believe, that I ever prayed in my lifetime with that reverence, or heard with that attention, or did any other work, with that pure and single eye, as I ought to have done." Or, as he says in another place, "I do not only betray the inbred venom of my heart, by poisoning my *common* actions, but even my most *religious* performances also with sin. I cannot pray but I sin; I cannot hear or preach a sermon, but I sin; I cannot give an alms, or receive the sacrament, but I sin. Nay, I cannot so much as confess my sins, but my very confessions are still aggravations of them; my repentance needs to be repented of; my tears want washing; and the very washing of my tears needs still to be washed over again with the blood of my Redeemer. Thus not only the worst of my sins, but even the best of my duties, speak me a child of Adam. Insomuch that whenever I reflect on my past actions, methinks I cannot but look on my whole life, from the time of my conception to this very moment, to be but as one continued act of sin."

With these feelings, you would be sensible at once, that Jesus Christ is the only and complete Savior of sinners, and that it is only "by his obedience many are made righteous." Instead of trusting in your prayers, you would mourn over their imperfections, and be led to trust simply, wholly, and entirely in Christ and him crucified. An old writer, Scudder, observes, "God uses, when he is overcome by prayer," (alluding to Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 28.) "to work in them that do overcome, some sense of weakness, to let them know that they prevail with him in prayer, not by any strength of their own, not by any worthiness of their prayers, when they have prayed best, but from the goodness of God's free grace, from the worthiness of Christ's intercession, by whom they offer up their prayers, and from the truth of his promise made unto them that pray. If it were not thus, many, when they have their heart's desire in prayer, would ascribe all to the goodness of their

* See Beveridge's Private Thoughts, a most useful practical Book for the young Christian.

prayers, and not to the free grace of God; and would be proud of their own strength, which is in truth none at all."

I have thus endeavored to show you the nature and privilege of prayer; may you be so convinced that it is your duty, as to be desirous of farther instruction on this subject.

CHAPTER III.

THE ASSISTANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN PRAYER.

Suppose the case of a calm at sea. The ship in the midst of the ocean is sometimes arrested in its progress by a dead calm. Every sail is spread to catch the dying breeze, but all in vain. The vessel continues almost motionless on the vast expanse, or only rocked to and fro by the swell of the sea. The mariners look out day after day, with longing eyes, for a favorable gale to carry them onward; and perhaps when they almost despair of attaining it, then, in this hour of need, the sea manifests in the distance a darker hue, some clouds are seen rising in the horizon, a ripple appears upon the water, the sails begin to fill, the wished-for breeze springs up, the sea parts and foams, and the ship darts along to its destined port.

Thus it is sometimes with the Christian. He needs the breeze from above, and could not without it advance in his course. Sometimes, after using every means of grace, his soul seems motionless in the voyage, and his heart sighs and longs for better days. His sails are spread, he is on his way, longing and waiting for, and yet not immediately receiving, the favorable breath of heaven. It is delayed, perhaps, to show him his own inability and weakness, that he is entirely dependent on divine grace, and that the Holy Spirit is the free gift of God. But he is waiting for the breeze, and at length the wind blows, every sail is filled, every faculty, affection, and power is engaged; he proceeds rapidly in his course, and is wafted along towards the desired haven.

"Without me," says Christ, "ye can do nothing." The words are full and express: *nothing*, nothing pleasing to God.

We are by nature *averse to prayer.* If prayer were natural to us, we should find no difficulty in having our hearts engaged in an intercourse so advantageous and so honorable. But who that has attempted this duty, has not found an averseness of heart, a distaste or disrelish, when about to engage in secret prayer? The soul is often straitened, shut up, and closed. Though the Christian knows it to be both his duty and his privilege to pray, he sometimes finds an insuperable impotency and unwillingness. His mind is, perhaps, filled with worldly cares and anxieties; his affections are wandering after a thousand vanities, and he finds it a laborious effort to drag his soul to the throne of grace.

We are also *ignorant as to the subjects of prayer.*—"We know not what to pray for as we ought."* We indeed feel our misery, but are not fully acquainted either with the cause or the remedy. Blind men may be conscious of the evil which surrounds them, but cannot see the way to avoid it, nor know how to obtain that which will be for their good. If we know at all what to pray for, yet we have not adequate views of our original depravity, and our exceeding sinfulness and unbelief; nor of the fullness and power of Christ the Savior. We do not regard the glory of God, but our own ease and pleasure. By nature we love outward good, and are ready to ask in sickness for health, in pain for ease, in sorrow for comfort, in poverty for wealth, in disregard and contempt for honor and esteem; without considering God's glory, or our eternal good. The mother of Zebedee's children asked for a place of great honor for her sons; but our Lord said, "Ye know not what ye ask."† Often those things which we are ready to ask for, would, if God were to give them to us, be our greatest curse.

Nor, however useful and valuable in themselves, do forms of prayer remedy our ignorance. It is one thing to repeat a form of prayer from a book, or from memory; and it is another thing to have the spirit of prayer in the heart. Two persons may use the same words, and one be worshipping God in spirit and in truth; whilst the other is drawing near to Him with his lips only, and his heart is far from him.

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* Rom. viii. 26. † Matt. xx. 22.

This ignorance in the understanding is accompanied also with *a perverseness in the affections.* We have that carnal mind within us, which "is enmity against God." Therefore, though we have all knowledge, though we may pray, either by the most excellent of forms, or by the exercise of the understanding, our affections do not naturally rise to God. The matter of our prayer may be good; but the Lord looks at the heart that offers it up. Are your prayers then offered up with an humble and believing heart? are your affections holy and heavenly? are your desires ardent and steady? or, do you not often feel an insurmountable languor oppressing you; so that, like David's, your soul cleaves to the dust?

It will make the subject more plain, if we endeavor to show the state of the heart in public worship. Judging only by the outward expressions of penitence and contrition, of holy desire, and warm thanksgiving, of earnest intercession, we should say, What heavenly Christians are these! But could we see all that the eye of God discerns in the hearts of the worshippers, the vain thoughts and distractions, the earthly schemes and plans contriving and executing in the midst of all this apparent devotion, what a mockery would our solemn meetings be often found to be! the very house of God turned again into a "den of thieves."* O what a cold, wandering, and distracted heart is often concealed, under the drama, as it were, of pure and heavenly prayers!

I have stated thus fully the infirmities and deficiencies connected with the performance of this holy duty, in order that the absolute necessity of divine assistance may be more clearly perceived. Blessed be God, we need not be left to ourselves, under the wretchedness and ruin of our fallen nature. However great and multiplied our infirmities, however dark our ignorance, however dull and dead our hearts, there is a power that can raise, support, enlighten, and revive.

The necessity of the assistance of the Holy Spirit, is a principle of main and vital importance in the Christian system; and therefore the Scriptures are very express upon it.

The Holy Ghost is plainly *promised to the Church.*—

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* Prov. v. 14.

Thus it is foretold, "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring."* "I will put my Spirit within you."† And our Lord evidently extends the promise of the Spirit to all that seek it, when he says, "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!"‡

The Holy Spirit is promised *for the purpose of assisting us in our prayers.*—That promise is directly in point —"I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications."§ Again, the Apostle thus describes the experience of Christians—"The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."‖ Dr. Owen observes, "that it cannot be denied, that the assistance which the Holy Spirit gives us in our prayers and supplications, is more frequently and expressly asserted in the Scripture, than any other operation of his whatever."

The Scriptures also, when exciting us to the duty of prayer, direct us to pray through the aid of the Holy Ghost. Thus Jude says, (ver. 20, 21,) "praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." St. Paul says, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance."¶

This aid of the Spirit in prayer is *a blessing which belongs to all the children of God.* "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."** "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father."††

Indeed, the gift of the Spirit is the great promise of the New Testament. It is the grand privilege of the Christian church, that, since the resurrection of Christ, a larger measure of that Spirit has been given to the people of God. Jesus Christ was to baptize his people with the Holy Ghost.‡‡ He told his disciples just before his death, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter

* Isa. xliv. 3. † Ezek. xxxvi. 27 ‡ Luke xi. 13.
§ Zech. xii. 10. ‖ Rom. viii. 26. ¶ Eph. vi. 18.
** Gal. iv. 6. †† Rom. viii. 15. ‡‡ Matt. iii. 11.

will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."*

The sentiments of the church of England on this doctrine are very clearly expressed. Thus in the 13th Article it is said, "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God." In the Sermon or Homily for Rogation week, it is said, "that we may boldly come in prayer, and call upon Almighty God as our Father, it is by the Holy Spirit, which maketh intercession for us with continual sighs." Hence we find in the Liturgy various prayers expressly for the aid of the Holy Spirit. "Grant that thy Holy Spirit may, in all things, direct and rule our hearts."† "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee."‡ These, with many other similar passages, which might be brought, show the mind of our Reformers on this subject.

Having shown the necessity of the Spirit's aid, I would now endeavor, in some measure, to explain how this aid is given. The Scriptures express it generally under the terms, "helpeth our infirmities," and "maketh intercession for us," &c.

The Holy Spirit *helps our infirmities.*—The original expression for "helpeth" (συναντιλαμβανεται) implies, that the Spirit takes upon himself a large part of the burden by which our infirmity is weighed down, and not only succors us in a slight degree, but effectually relieves us, by bearing himself, as it were, the burden with us. "The image is taken from one who sets his shoulders and lifts with us at the same load. What if it be not said in Scripture that we shall be wholly delivered in this world from our moral sicknesses? it is sufficient cause for thankfulness that we are effectually assisted under them." Even a renewed soul cannot of itself raise its affections and desires after heavenly things. We find the remains of our corrupt nature an oppressive load; but if we ask, and diligently seek for the

* John xvi. 7. † Collect, 19th Sunday after Trinity.

‡ Collect before Communion Service. See also Art. 10, 11; 2d Collect at Evening Prayer; 5th Sunday after Easter; 13th after Trinity. The Petitions, "Endue us with the grace of thy Holy Spirit,"—"Take not thy Holy Spirit from us," teach the same truth.

aid of the Spirit, that burden under which we are ready to sink will be removed, and our hearts raised in prayer to God; the Spirit will relieve us in our necessities. Preston, in his Treatise called "The Saint's Exercise," thus illustrates the subject: "A fountain has always an aptness to pour forth water, but cannot if it be stopped by mud, stones, or other impediments: so in prayer, 'the spirit is willing,' (to pray or do other duties,) 'but the flesh is weak.' Yet here the Holy Ghost 'helps our infirmities,' removing stoppages from the fountain, taking away carnal impediments, and stirring up the regenerate part, whereby we are able to make a spiritual prayer unto God."

"The Holy Spirit enlightens the understanding, to show us what we need; and sanctifies the heart, so that we desire what is really good for us. He removes our natural ignorance and blindness. We know not our sinfulness and unbelief; but the Holy Spirit reproves or convinces the world "of sin, because they believe not in Christ."* He thus shows us our great and alarming danger, and inclines us earnestly to seek deliverance.

Our Lord says to the Apostles, "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."† We may therefore reasonably conclude that the Holy Spirit acts upon our minds after this manner, bringing the declarations, the threatenings, and the promises of the word of Christ to our recollection; and thereby producing in us a desire to obey his word, escape his displeasure, and obtain his favor.

The enlightening and sanctifying influences of the Spirit are of great importance as to prayer, being needful in preparing our hearts for holy intercourse with God, and for desiring those things which will glorify Him, and really benefit our own souls.

We know not what to pray for as we ought. St. James affirms, "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, to consume it on your lusts." This being so, "the Holy Spirit maketh intercession for us, according to the will of God."‡ He directs and guides our minds to right ends in asking, and "the Lord knows the mind of the

* John, xvi. 9. † John, xiv. 26. ‡ Rom. viii. 27.

Spirit." He approves and accepts the prayer made under his influence.

The intercession of the Holy Spirit differs from that of Christ. Our Lord intercedes in heaven, separate and apart from us, by himself, at the throne of Glory. The Holy Spirit intercedes in, and with our hearts, at the throne of grace. The gift and intercession of the Holy Spirit is the fruit and effect of the intercession of Christ, who, "when he ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and received 'this gift' for men, yea, even for the rebellious."

Christians have, then, the intercession, the additional interposition of the Holy Spirit; like a powerful and able advocate, who takes up our sinking cause; urges our necessities, and our pleas, with power, earnestness, and perseverance; and places them with strong and irresistible effect in such a light, that it is evident the suit is obtained and the request granted. Thus the Spirit maketh intercession for us, suggesting to us, and offering up in us, those desires, arguments, and pleas, which would otherwise never have arisen in our minds.

"The Holy Spirit," says one of the Reformers, "excites within us confidence, desires, and sighs, to the conception of which our native powers were altogether inadequate." There are pious persons of very poor attainments in other respects, without learning or human acquirements, in the very lowest stations of life, who, asking for the aid of the Holy Spirit, can, with the greatest propriety of expression, the deepest reverence, and an uninterrupted fluency of words, pour out their souls to God, and edify their families and their neighbors. Indeed, have not those who entirely decry the assistance of the Holy Spirit, as given to believers in our days, reason to fear lest they should be guilty, in some measure, of the sin of blasphemy against him?

There is a distinction, not improperly made, between the *gift* and the *grace* of prayer, though perhaps the more just distinction would be between the talent of elocution and the spirit of prayer. Some have a natural or acquired power of a great command of words, and a full flow of language, which enables them to pray with facility, and so far it is very desirable; and I hesitate not to say with Dr. Watts, that "there is the ordinary assistance of the Spirit required, even to the attainment of this holy skill or ability to pray." But men may have this talent, and yet

have none of the real feeling of want, desire, resignation, peace, hope, joy, &c. which form the essence of true prayer, and without which the best expressions are of little worth. The right spirit of prayer is not merely to be able to press God with the most proper words and urgent vehemence; this is talent and elocution. True prayer is a higher thing, the special gift of the Holy Ghost; not so much a matter of the lips, as of the heart. He has the most of this gift, who has; "the most enlightened apprehension of the God to whom he speaks: the deepest sense of his own wants; the most eager longings after grace, the most fervent desires of supplies from heaven; and, in a word, whose heart sends up the strongest cries to the Father of Mercies." Hence many may have much of the spirit of prayer, who have but a small degree of the power of utterance.

Much, indeed, of the work of the Spirit, is secret. We know not various particulars connected with it. We know it rather by its effects, than by its mode of operation. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." We experience its power, and that is sufficient. The Christian knows that he has often knelt down averse to prayer, dead, dull, stupid; almost without desiring the blessings for which we ought to ask. And yet, with all his weakness, after looking for the aid of the Spirit, after praying as David did, "Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise;"* and persevering in asking, seeking, and knocking,† he has in such a remarkable way experienced the presence of God, as to fill him with joy unspeakable, and a hope full of glory. He has, in these cases, sometimes found an unction, an enlargement of expression, so far beyond any thing that he had previously calculated on, or could expect, accompanied by such lively and vehement desires and thirstings after God, and holiness, and glory, as satisfactorily and evidently to his mind, marked the agency and assistance of a divine power "which maketh intercession for us."

But farther, he maketh intercession "with groanings which cannot be uttered." I am sensible that I am here

* Ps. li. 15. † Matth. vii. 7.

bringing a subject forward which must be in a great measure unintelligible (and may therefore appear absurd) to those who have never experienced it; but since the sacred writings have plainly stated it, we should neither conceal it, nor keep it back. And conceive the case of a mind truly and fully awakened to see the shortness of time, the vanity of wordly things, the unutterable glory of the blessed, the never-ending anguish of the condemned, the boundless ages of eternity, the uncertainty of every moment, and the inseparable connexion between obtaining grace in this life, and glory in the next. If we realize this state of mind, we may easily imagine that there are such ardent thirstings wrought in the immortal soul, after pardon, grace, Christ, heaven, and glory, as no words are great or strong enough to express. The Psalms of David often manifest this state of mind—"My soul fainteth," he says, "for thy salvation. O Lord, how long? I am weary with my groaning." Here we may observe some of the groanings of him in whom the Spirit intercedes; but yet this intercession is with such importunity of desire, such holy pleading and wrestling with God, such ardor of spirit, such inward laboring and working of the heart toward God, as cannot be expressed by words.

It may be proper, for preventing mistakes, to add, that it is not meant that we may now receive, or expect, those extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit which enabled the early Christians to pray in a foreign tongue, or suggested every particular word or expression. Our prayers are not so entirely under the influence of the Spirit, as, like those of David, to be properly the work of inspiration: so much of our weakness mingles with them, that we cannot say of any sentence, This is the perfect work of the Spirit. Every feeling, and desire, must also be tried by the sacred touchstone, the Word of God, that we may know whence it comes. But the Holy Spirit does give those graces of love, fear, hope, and joy, that are suited to this duty; does excite holy desires, raise holy expectations, and work holy affections in us; does, we are persuaded, often secretly incline our minds to pray, and help us in praying, giving us clear perceptions, a ready utterance, and an humble confidence; and this aid is totally distinct from and superior to that general aid, which the providence of God affords to men in general, in order to their performance of the va-

rious actions of their natural life. "The workings of the Spirit are not indeed," says Watts, "to be easily distinguished by ourselves, or by others, from the rational motions of our own hearts, influenced by moral arguments; but by the whole tendency, and the sanctifying effects, we may know that we had some assistance of the blessed Spirit."

Some mistake in another way, supposing that men should never attempt to pray but when they feel the present impulse of the Holy Spirit. But in reply it may be observed, that we are commanded to pray always. Go forward in the duty, and you may expect difficulties to be removed. Neglect not any proper season of prayer; nor, on the other hand, neglect any duty of your station under the pretence of an impulse to pray. The Holy Spirit draws us to God at fit seasons.

We are not in danger of quenching, or grieving, the Spirit by the humble and diligent use of the means of grace; but there is much danger in losing this heavenly guest by the indulgence of any sin, and especially of any sensual iniquity.* "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" O defile not that temple, provoke not that Spirit; live in the Spirit, and then you will pray in the Spirit.

Having thus guarded against some mistakes, let it be remarked, what a comfort it is that there is an express promise that "our heavenly Father will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him." You need not then fear, however dull, or dead, or cold your heart may be, to set about this duty. Seek, and you may fully expect to obtain, that aid of the Spirit, which will help you, and carry you through all your difficulties. Be diligent in reading the Bible, in coming to the Savior, and in earnest entreaties for the influence of his Spirit. If you would obtain much of this divine influence live near to your Lord who gives it.†

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* Ps. li. 11. † John, xiv. 16, 17.

CHAPTER IV.

THE INTERCESSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

You have now seen how the Holy Spirit assists us in prayer; his aid, and the acceptance of our prayers, are obtained through the intercession of Jesus Christ. While the Bible tells us that Jesus Christ is "God over all blessed for ever;" it discovers to us also his mediatorial kingdom. It tells us that "there is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus."* "Him hath God exalted as a Prince and a Savior," to give many blessed gifts to his people.

The first fruit of his ascending up on high, was the gift of the Holy Spirit. St. Peter shows us that the prophet Joel had foretold that full effusion of the Holy Spirit which took place on the ascension of Jesus Christ, in these words —"and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." And after describing other effects of this, he says, "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Our Lord also tells his disciples that he will pray for this gift: he says, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you *for ever*."† The gift of the Spirit, and the intercession of Christ, are thus connected together in the sacred writings.

It is unnecessary here to enter on a description of this intercession in all its bearings: it will be sufficient chiefly to dwell on it in reference to our prayers.

The intercession of Christ is his earnest address to God in behalf of those for whom he prays. In order the better to understand this, consider, *the office which he bears as our High Priest.*—The High Priest of Israel had to burn incense, in the holy place on the altar of incense, morning and evening perpetually throughout the year.† And he was once a year to appear in the holy of holies, alone, to sprinkle blood upon and before the mercy-seat; to make an atonement for himself, for his household, and for all the

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* 1 Tim. ii. 5. † John xiv 16 ‡ Exod. xxx. 7, 8

congregation of Israel.* The Apostle shows us that this was typical of Jesus Christ, who "is not entered into the holy place made with hands, which are figures of the true: but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."† And he points out the superior advantage of this priesthood on account of the holy character and the enduring continuance of our High Priest: "Wherefore," he says, 'he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."‡ While his "people are praying without,"‖ our High Priest is interceding within, and offering up our prayers.

Indeed, other offices which Christ bears, are full of comfort in our approaches to God. He is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," by whom we go to the Father. He is "a Prophet" to teach us to pray, and "a King who shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper."

Consider, then, *his redemption*—Man was afar off from God, guilty, and under the penalty of that sentence, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die!" How was the mercy of God to be displayed, and his justice remain unsullied? By the death of the holy Jesus, the Son of God, his justice is satisfied and engaged on the sinner's side: so that his mercy may flow to sinners in copious and uninterrupted streams. The divine love has its brightest displays, in being manifested towards the unworthy; and the Almighty arm is now stretched forth to save, and not to destroy the sinful. All the perfections of God being engaged on the sinner's side, the intercession of Him who has accomplished this, will evidently prevail. The sinner may now be received as a child returning to a reconciled Father. Here, then, and here only, is the true ground of encouragement for us to draw near with confidence to the holy God.

Consider the *situation of the Intercessor*. He is "at the right hand of God."§ We may learn hence his power, his dignity, his holiness, his interest with God, and his being ever present in heaven for us. "All power is given him in heaven and earth."¶ "All things go," says Bishop Hopkins, "by favor and friendship in the courts of heaven; if

* Lev. xvi. 14—17. † Heb. ix. 24. ‡ Heb. vii. 25.
‖ Luke i. 10. § Rom. viii. 34. ¶ Matt. xxviii. 18.

we stand upon our own merits and deserts, we shall be shamefully disappointed in our expectations: we have no merit to take place in heaven, but only the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ."* Ah! how absurdly do they act, who, when such an Intercessor pleads for us, put their cause into the hands of any creature, saint, or angel.

Consider *his character.* He is the beloved Son of God, "the elect in whom his soul delighteth."† He is "holy harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."‡ And with all this, he is full of compassion, tenderness, and love. "We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."‖ He is one who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way. Seeing, then, that we have such a great, such a compassionate High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."§

Consider, farther, *the nature of his Intercession.* St. John seems to give us an emblematic view of this:¶ "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." Even the prayers of the saints are so defective, that they need the incense of our Redeemer's merit to make them acceptable unto God.

Jesus Christ intercedes *by personally appearing for us before God.* In heaven itself he now appears "in the presence of God for us. This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sin, for ever sat down on the right hand of God."** "By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place."†† The virtue, merit, and power of that blood still remain. How sure may we be, then, that he will ob-

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* See Bishop Hopkins's Works, a most valuable body of Divinity
† Isa. xlii. 1. ‡ Heb. vii. 26. ‖ Heb. iv. 15.
§ Heb. iv. 16. ¶ Rev. viii. 3, 4. ** Heb. x. 12.
†† Heb. ix. 12.

tain what he asks, when he pleads that he *died* to procure it! He ascended into heaven with the body in which he suffered; and we may imagine, when he makes intercession, that body silently and yet powerfully urges his plea in our behalf. Hence, St. John, who saw the glory of the inner temple of God, says, "I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, stood a lamb as it had been slain." This view of the subject has been well illustrated by the story of Amyntas and Æchylas related by the historian Ælian. Æchylas was condemned to death by the Athenians, and was about to be led to execution. His brother Amyntas had signalized himself in the service of his country, and on the day of a most illustrious victory, in a great measure obtained by his means, had lost his hand. He came into the court, just as his brother was condemned, and without saying any thing, exposed the stump of his arm from under his garment, and held it up in their sight; and the historian tells us, "that when the judges saw this mark of his sufferings, they remembered what *he* had done, and for his sake discharged the guilty brother, whose life had been forfeited." The wounded body of the Savior, though there may remain no visible marks of his humble state, is, in the sight of God, thus perpetually pleading for his sinful and guilty brethren. Not that God the Father is severe, austere, difficult to be entreated, or hard to be won: this would be a very mistaken view of him whose name is *Love.* The Father appoints this way of approach in infinite compassion and love to us, that we may "come boldly unto the throne of grace:"* and though his holiness be such that he cannot endure the approach of sinners without a Mediator, yet it was his own free grace which moved him to provide a Mediator, and disposes him to accept his mediation in our behalf. Hence the Father himself is represented as willing to hear us, when we pray in the name of Jesus. Thus our Lord says to his disciples,† "At that day ye shall ask in my name, and I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you."

Jesus Christ intercedes for his people *by praying for them.* Does he see them exposed to the just vengeance of the holy almighty God? Is the sentence gone forth, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" he prays, "Let i

* Heb. iv. 16. † John xvi. 26, 27

alone this year also, and I will dig about it, and dung it, and if it bear fruit, well; but if not, after that thou shalt cut it down."* Are any of his disciples exposed to peculiar temptations and dangers, so that it may be said of them, as it was of Peter, "Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat?" he adds, "But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not."† Indeed, we could never pray ourselves, we could never approach unto God so as to be accepted of him, but through the intercession of Christ. "No man," saith our Lord, "cometh unto the Father, but by me."‡ By his prayers we receive the Holy Spirit,§ and many other spiritual blessings. In the 17th of John, you have a delightful specimen and example of the prayers which Jesus our Lord himself makes for his people.

Jesus Christ also *offers up our prayers.*—It was the office of the Jewish priests to present the prayers of Israel unto God at the time they burned incense before the Lord on the altar. And thus our High Priest, by his own intercession, makes even our poor and imperfect sighs and groans prevailing and effectual. The very best prayers we make, even when aided by the Holy Spirit of our God, are so tainted with our sins, and so mingled with our imperfections, as to need his mediation for their acceptance. He has assured us,‖ "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." This name of Christ enabled those who used it, through faith in his name, to work miracles, cast out devils, speak with new tongues, and oppose and overcome Satan, the world, and the flesh; and by it we shall assuredly prevail in all our petitions. Our persons and our prayers are accepted of God, in and by Jesus Christ.¶

It is delightful to consider further, that *the intercession of our Lord is all in our behalf.* It is said of the prophet Elijah, "Elias made intercession to God against Israel." "He was," says Trail, "a severe prophet, and had severe service put into his hand; but our great Prophet and High Priest makes no intercession against his Israel, but all for them." In that pattern of what he is doing,** we may ob-

* Luke xiii. 8, 9. † Luke xxii. 32. ‡ John xiv. 6.
§ John xiv. 16. ‖ John xvi 23. ¶ Eph. i. 6; 1 Pet. ii. 5.
** John xvii

serve that he mentions not one fault of his disciples, but selects what was good in their conduct, and then pleads their cause. Let us see in this his love; let us trust him entirely.

The intercession of Christ is *an enduring* act of mercy. His grace and love never fail. It is said,* "He ever liveth to make intercession." Therefore the Apostle adds, "He is able to save to the uttermost." We need not fear that we are now too late to obtain the advantages of it. He intercedes for his church now, as he did in the days of his flesh.†

It is also an *intercession for sinners.*—It was foretold of him, "He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.‡ Hence he prayed even for his murderers. When they had taunted and reviled him, and nailed him to the accursed tree, he still prays, "Father, forgive them." And there is a special intercession for his people, which may greatly encourage believers. St. Paul says, "who also maketh intercession for us."§ The connexion here shows him to mean God's peculiar people; hence our Lord says,‖ "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine." Augustine says, "Christian men in their prayers mutually recommend each other to the divine regard. That person for whom no one intercedes, while he intercedes for all, is the true and only mediator."

I have stated thus fully and plainly, from the Holy Scriptures, the doctrine of the intercession of Jesus Christ, because it is not only a most delightful truth to those who feel the burden of their sins, but is highly profitable to us when duly improved. To this end it should be considered before, at the time of, and after, your prayers.

Before prayers. Make it the only ground of your encouragement to draw near to God. Do not, on the one hand, trust in any preparation which you may have made, or in any dispositions which you may have acquired; and on the other hand, whatever your former transgressions,¶ or aggravated wickedness, may have been,** or whatever is the conviction of your present sinfulness,†† or

* Heb. vii. 25. † John xvii. 20, 24. ‡ Isa. liii. 12.
§ Rom. viii. 34. ‖ John xvii. 9. ¶ Ps. xxv 7.
** Ps. xxv. 11; lxxix. 8, 11. †† Jer. xiv. 7.

your indisposition to approach God, still endeavor to come with freedom, knowing that you "have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins."*

At the time of prayer. Let the intercession of Christ encourage you. Expect, through his mediation, the spirit of grace and supplication.† By the exercise of faith, however weak, still expect to receive, "out of his fullness, grace," suited to our necessity However great the matter for which you ask, however many things in yourself may tend to discourage or discomfort you; you have a sufficient ground to hope for the acceptance of your prayers, through the name and mediation of Jesus Christ. His gracious intercession remains firm and unchangeable. Let faith in Christ's merits quiet and compose your troubled mind, and dispose and strengthen you to leave every petition with comfort and confidence in his hands.

After prayer. However conscience may accuse you of many wanderings, imperfections, and distractions, or abuses of former answers to prayer, or however earnest or fervent your petitions, still plead for acceptance only on this ground, Christ is your mediator. Your hope of a favorable reception of any prayer is, and is only, in the name and work of Jesus Christ, and not in your own prayers. A practical writer observes, "If we cast our anchor on Christ, and rest upon his merits, and intercession, in order to the receiving of an answer to our prayer, we shall have a sufficient hold to keep us sure and stedfast, in the midst of the tossing waves of this world. By this we may answer all. Christ is faithful, and a tender sympathizing High Priest, and so will not, and cannot forget or neglect our cause."‡

"He," says Ambrose, "is our mouth, with which we address the Father; our eye, by which we behold him; our hands, by which we present ourselves to him: without whose mediation neither we, nor any of all the saints, have the least intercourse with God."

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* 1 John ii. 1. 2. † Zech. xii. 10.

‡ Brown on Prayer: an author to whom the writer has been often indebted.

CHAPTER V.

ON PRIVATE PRAYER.

It is observed by Dr. Owen, "that if a man of a carna mind be brought into a large company, he will have much to do; if into a company of Christians, he will feel little interest; if into a still smaller, engaged in religious exercises, he will feel still less; but if taken into a closet, and forced to meditate on God and eternity, this will be insupportable to him." Man is evidently by nature averse to all communion with God. There is an enmity to be removed.* And hence arises the necessity of a change of mind; of obtaining "a spiritual mind," without which, spiritual truths and exercises can neither engage nor influence the heart. The man who possesses a spiritual mind, does, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, often find that closet retirement, which Dr. Owen states to be so insupportable to the carnal mind, a real privilege.

The duty of prayer generally has already been proved; and that of closet devotion is plain from our Lord's direction.† Let us endeavor, however, always to consider it as an advantage afforded to us, rather than as a work required of us.

Baxter well expresses this:‡ "What delightful converse may a Christian have with God alone! He is always present, always at leisure to be spoke with, always easy of access. He has no interest that will clash with our happiness. He never mistakes our meaning nor our character. In proportion, indeed, as any thing of God appears in men, their converse is excellent and delightful. But there is so much of vanity and sin in all of us, as exceedingly darkens our light, and damps the pleasure, and blasts the profit of our mutual converse. How often have I been delighted in God, when I have found most deceit and darkness in the world! How often has he comforted me, when it was not in man to do it!"

In order to have a fuller view of secret prayer, we will

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* Rom. viii. 7. † Matt. vi. 6.

‡ See his excellent little Tract, "Converse with God in Solitude."

consider it under different sections, as it is distinguished from other kinds of worship; as it respects the object of worship; the subjects to be mentioned; the use of forms, the various parts, the answer, the frequency, and the reward of prayer. After dwelling on these particulars in this chapter, we may afterwards be the more brief in remarks on other kinds of prayer.

SECT. I.—*On Secret Prayer, as distinguished from other kinds of worship.*

There are *some things in which secret prayer has an advantage over social and public worship.* By praying in secret we give God the glory of his being everywhere present, and seeing and knowing all things. We acknowledge not only his general providence, as taking care of communities; but his particular providence, as watching over us individually. We express our faith in his presence, his power, and his love.

The Christian can also in secret give free vent to every desire; vary his request according to the present state of his mind, or the present necessities of the day or hour in which he is living; he can dwell on his personal wants; and, in short, give full scope to his feelings, and pour out his whole soul before God, with a freedom that he would not before his dearest friend.

Prayer in secret is also considered by our Lord as forming a line of distinction between the Christian and the mere professor. "When thou prayest thou shalt not be as the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men."* When we are constant in secret prayer, not as an act of self-righteousness, but from a feeling of necessity, and of its being both our duty and privilege, we may hope well of our sincerity, and of the general state of our souls before God.

Other advantages of secret prayer, will be noticed afterwards. But it must not be concealed, that there are *peculiar difficulties in constant and fervent secret prayer.* We have many adversaries opposing us. We are by nature both reluctant to the duty, and utterly helpless and insufficient in ourselves. We can do nothing by our own strength;

* Matt. vi. 5.

though we may 'do all things by Christ strengthening us.' And besides the oppositions of a corrupt nature within, the temptations of the world without continually draw and allure us from the practice of this duty. Our great enemy, Satan, also, uses every temptation to keep us from secret prayer. Hence, though it is a most evident and needful, as well as profitable duty, yet it is one which it is not easy with constancy and effect to fulfil. We do not find it so difficult to read the Bible, go to Church, or hear sermons, as we do to persevere in constant, fervent, and believing private prayer. "It is easier," says one, "to hear a whole hour, than to pray for a quarter of an hour." "When," says another, "we have overcome the difficulties at one time, it may be the next day we shall meet with new conflicts, new distempers, new afflictions, new strength of lusts, and a new indisposition of mind, against which we must put on a strong and unalterable resolution; as that holy man who said, he never went to pray but he found so many impediments, that except he so bound himself by a firm determination, he could never have been constant, or kept himself from formal or customary performance." Let it then encourage us to consider, that nothing so effectually as prayer impairs the kingdom of darkness, and hinders the success of our adversary. It is a just and excellent observation, that continuing in prayer will make a man give over sinning, or else, continuing in sin will make him give over praying.

The retirement of private prayer specially distinguishes it; and our Lord has, in a few words, fully stated to us its true character in this respect—"Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." The principle which is here inculcated is, the avoiding of all show in your religion, any thing that might foster vain glory, or appear to proceed from it. In actions done in public, the opinions and thoughts of others are apt to have an undue weight and influence upon our minds. Our Lord is not here speaking against public or social worship, which he elsewhere commands;* but is exposing the vain show

* Matt. xviii. 20.

and hypocrisy of mere professors, "having a form of godliness without the power."

That those who are here addressed do pray is taken for granted: the duty is manifest and unquestionable; and the mode of our Lord's expression may imply, that a Christian's living without prayer is a contradiction in terms.

The retirement of private devotion is strongly inculcated in the expression, "Enter into thy closet." Retire from company. Go by thyself. Be alone. The word, ταμειον, (closet) means any retired solitary place, at home or abroad, where we may escape from the observation of others, and be undisturbed by them; not that the closet itself possesses any sanctity, or will work in the way of a charm. You are not to go into your closet on that account; but you retire from the notice of others to avoid ostentation on the one hand, and distraction on the other. "Shut thy door." Keep out the world, and prevent every intrusion: thou hast a great business to transact with thy God, and let not the dearest friend or relative interfere with thy intercourse and converse with him. The privacy of prayer is the great thing which is here enforced. Poor persons who have but one apartment, may enter into the spirit of this direction by praying wherever they can be retired. Isaac's closet was a field. "He went out to meditate in the field at even-tide."* David's closet was his bed-chamber. "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."† Our Lord's closet was a mountain. "When he had sent the multitude away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray, and when the evening was come, he was there alone."‡ Peter's closet was the house-top. "Peter went upon the house-top to pray, about the sixth hour."§ Hezekiah's closet was turning "his face towards the wall, and praying unto the Lord."‖

But there is a retiredness of heart and a self-recollection which is of greater importance than any particular place of prayer. This is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, as has already been shown; let us then continually look for and solely depend on his aid, which alone can enable us to give our whole hearts to this great work. Some have found it a happy means of assisting in gaining self-recol-

* Gen. xxiv. 63. † Ps. iv. 4. ‡ Matt. xiv. 23
§ Acts, x. 9. ‖ Isa. xxxiii. 2.

lection, to have nothing to do but to pray. "We must," says Bonnel, "shut all other businesses from our minds at that time, and say, I have nothing to do this half hour, but to wait on my God. For if we determine ourselves no time, but are in haste to do something else, as soon as we have done our prayers, it is a great hazard if we are recollected at all during our worship."

Sect. II.—*On the Being to be worshipped.*

It is evident that the Being whom all men are to worship, must be everywhere present, have all power and know all things. Many prayers being offered up, at the same time, by many persons, and for different things, an assurance that he possesses these attributes is necessary, in order to our placing confidence in him, that he will answer all, and give to each that which is best in his particular situation. Hence the absurdity of praying to Saints and Angels, or through their mediation.

God is also infinitely holy and righteous; "a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."* He has all means in his control; he is Lord of all worlds; and he has all riches in his possession. But when to these perfections we can add the attributes of goodness, tenderness, and love, we may then have the greatest confidence. And this is the case with the Christian. He may consider God, not only as the Father of the human race, but as *his father* in a more special relation. Christians have received "the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry Abba, Father:" they are "reconciled to God by the death of his Son. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."† Jesus Christ delights to bring this relation before us. He tells us, "When ye pray, say, Our Father,—pray to thy Father which is in secret." Private prayer is the soul's approach in its retirements to this reconciled Father; to one who has been pleased to endear himself by so condescending and so kind a title. He is "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," and in him he is ours also. Our Lord says to Mary, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father,"—first mine, and then yours. And how graciously he encourages us to bring our wants before God—"What

* Deut. xxxii. 4. † Ps. ciii. 13.

man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him!"*

In praying to God the Father, we do not exclude the Son and Holy Spirit from our worship. We should ever include the thrice-holy Jehovah in our adoration.† In fact, we cannot as Christians worship the one Jehovah, but we include in that worship all the persons of the sacred Trinity; God is our Father only in Christ, and we call on him as such. We may however pray separately to each person of the ever-blessed Trinity. We may pray to Jesus Christ, (Luke xxiii. 42; Acts vii. 59; 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9,) and to the Spirit, (Matt. xxviii. 9; 2 Cor. xiii. 14; Isa. vi. 3. 9, compared with Acts xxviii. 25.) In worshipping them, we only worship the one God; yet the general way of approaching the Almighty in prayer, is to God the Father, through the mediation of the Son,‡ and by the aid of the Spirit.

How delightful is the relation subsisting between God and the Christian as father and child! The child receives every thing freely from paternal love; it does not come to the father as a purchaser, or as the merchant with an equivalent. When a desire for any good arises in the child's mind, it does not offer to buy it at a price, but simply expresses its feelings, and asks it as a gift. In its earliest years the child cannot speak its wants plainly; yet even in infancy, they are made known by looks and cries, and the father understands these expressions of its wishes. As the child grows up, all that the father requires of it is an affectionate and dutiful conduct, a reverence, and honor, and obedience, totally distinct from slavish fear, and which in effect only tends to promote its real happiness.

It is under the influence of these feelings that we should come to God, and though we only learn to cry "Abba, Father," by slow degrees, let us persevere in faith and love, till we receive the full Spirit of adoption.

In worshipping God, we need not be anxious to comprehend the particulars of his nature, except as he has revealed himself.§ Beware of any fanciful representation or

* Matt. vii. 9, 10.

† Isa. vi. 3; Rev. iv. 8.

‡ John xvi. 23.

§ Job xi. 7.

figure of him. All such things only tend to degrade him in our minds, and to fill us with unsuitable ideas of his Majesty. They are also directly prohibited in the word of God.* Jesus Christ is our only Mediator and ground of access to God the Father; and his Holy Spirit, the purchase of the blood of Christ, and sent by him to help our infirmities, our great Assistant. The view we should endeavor to have of God, is that which our Lord gives—"God is a Spirit:" and that which was revealed to Moses—"The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgressions, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty."† Keep fast hold then of this view of the character of God; it is exactly suited to the wants of sinners.

The consideration that the *eye of God is upon us*, that our heavenly Father is in secret, and there beholds us, should be continually on our minds as a motive for continual watchfulness, and a source of the greatest comfort. "Thou God seest me," should be written on the walls of our closet; or, rather, deeply engraven on our hearts. Before an earthly superior, we are careful and circumspect in all our expressions and actions: how careful then should we be when we approach unto one, who, though he is our Father, is yet the *King of kings*, and the *Lord of lords?* "If an angel, in all his heavenly brightness, were to be with us, sure our hearts would feel awed by his glorious presence. How much more then should it affect us, and fill us with a holy fear, to think, 'I am with God; he is present in the room with me! that God is now about me. whose glory stains and sullies the beauty, and extinguishes the light of angels!'"

Rush not, hastily, then, into the presence of God. Pause for a few moments. Meditate on his character. Consider his goodness, he is "our Father:" consider his greatness, he is "in heaven."

Recollect *the glorious Majesty of that Being whom you address.* He is in heaven, and we are upon earth. It is with reflections of this kind, that David begins many of his Psalms. Thus he says in the 104th Psalm, "O Lord, my God, thou art very great, thou art clothed with majesty and

* Deut. iv. 12—25; Isa. xl. 18—25. † Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

honor. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment, who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain, who layest the beams of his chamber in the water, who maketh the clouds his chariot, who walketh upon the wings of the wind." These recollections of his majesty are calculated, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, to bring your mind to a state of reverence and a holy admiration; of solemnity and devotional feeling. But lest this view of his awful grandeur should discourage you,

Recollect *his wonderful grace and mercy.* Ever look at him in Christ Jesus, as a tender and loving Father; as full of compassion and goodness. How he endears himself to you by characters of the utmost tenderness, compassion, and love! "Thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name."* "Return, saith the Lord, for I am married to you."† What affectionate wife will not rejoice in an opportunity of meeting a kind and faithful husband? What child, in a proper state of mind, will not willingly run to the arms of a tender father inviting him to come to him? It is our want of faith and love that makes our prayers a task and a burden. How often God invites us to pray! how much he promises, in order to encourage us to come to him with a holy boldness and confidence, freely and unreservedly! We need not fear to ask, when God himself commands us to do so.

Sect. III.—*On the Subjects to be mentioned in Prayer.*

"The feeling of our wants," says Mrs. More, "the confession of our sins, the acknowledgment of our dependence, the renunciation of ourselves, the supplication for mercy, the application to the fountain opened for sin, the cordial entreaty for the aid of the Spirit, the relinquishment of our own will, resolutions of better obedience, petitions that those resolutions may be directed and sanctified: these are the subjects in which the supplicant should be engaged, by which his thoughts should be absorbed."

Prayer being the expression of the heart's desire to God, we should, with all simplicity and sincerity, open our hearts unto him. When you retire to your devotions, lay aside all artificial, needless form, all distracting anxiety, and express your desires with the utmost plainness of speech.

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* Isa. liv. 5. † Jer. iii. 12—14.

Consider before you begin, what are those *sins*, which, if you were now on the point of death, would weigh most on your conscience, confess them, enlarge upon their circumstances and aggravations, bewail them, and plead for pardon through the blood of Christ. What *blessing* is there that you would desire above all other things, if you were sure to have your wish? Whatever it be, whether it be the supply of earthly wants, or pardon, grace, peace, or heaven itself—"ask, and ye shall have." What are those *mercies* and comforts which others have not, but you are now enjoying? and what are those which you could least of all spare? give hearty and unfeigned thanks for the possession of these. Consider the *wants of your friends*, your immediate relatives, and your acquaintance, and intercede for them. In short, make known your present sins, wants, desires, and mercies, and empty the very thoughts of your hearts in the most easy and obvious expressions.—"Lord, save me, or I perish; Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy upon me; God be merciful to me a sinner;" coming from a full heart, are of prevailing weight and importance: while the most eloquent form of words, which is the mere expression of the lips, is utterly unavailing. Thus you may see that there need not be any difficulty for the poorest and most unlearned to express their desires in prayer. And do you complain of indisposition and unwillingness to set about the duty? go to the footstool of mercy, confess, in broken sighs and groans, even this indisposition of heart, cast this care upon God, and he will either remove it, or accept those broken sighs, and unexpressed wishes of the heart, which mark the unfeigned desire to find his favor, and to love and serve him. The great thing is to have the heart right with God; then there will be no difficulty in finding matter for prayer. What the heart feels the mouth will express: and the varying temptations and circumstances of life will thus afford great variety in your prayers. Dwell, therefore, chiefly on those things with which you are the most deeply affected, which are warmest in your own hearts.

Prayer for *temporal blessings* should ever be mingled with expressions of entire and unfeigned submission to the will of God. To ask for them thus is not improper, but perfectly right, for many of the highest saints have done so, and it may please God in this way to impart those temporal good things which we need. Hannah asks for chil-

dren, and God hears her prayer. Hezekiah asks for health, and his sickness is removed. Paul prays for the father of Publius sick of a fever, and he is healed.* Nay, Asa is blamed, because "in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians."† Only see to it that your desires are purified from all carnal ends, and sanctified to the glory of God; that is, that you desire to serve him more through the things which you request. This makes the end of the prayer spiritual.

Prayer for *spiritual blessings*, for pardon, peace, holiness, love, the favor of God, and the glory of heaven, calls for great earnestness. Take no denial. Say, like Jacob, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."‡ Be importunate with your God. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Yet it is possible to desire even spiritual things for merely carnal ends, as with the notion of meriting heaven by them for human applause, &c. And it is too true, that not only the formalist, but a really devout man in general, may thus sometimes make a carnal prayer even when asking for spiritual things. Indeed, every prayer that we offer up needs divine forgiveness, and the Savior's mediation.

Sect. IV.—*On Forms of Prayer.*

Forms of prayer are in themselves not only lawful,§ but often, even in private, expedient and advantageous. They are a help by which a child may be trained to walk alone; the staff by which weak Christians may, through the divine blessing, be supported; or the strong, occasionally, when laboring under present deadness, or indisposition, be much assisted.

The necessity for forms of prayer must therefore be left to the cases and consciences of individuals. Let it be remembered, that it is not forms of prayer, nor the want of them, that makes real devotion; but the grace of God in Christ Jesus. It is confessed that many not only do not use forms, but would be straitened in the use of them. Surely Christians ought to have wisdom and charity neither to censure nor to speak disdainfully of those who in earnest seek communion with God, either in the use of forms or

* Acts xxviii. 8.
† 2 Chron. xvi. 12.
‡ Gen. xxxii. 26.
§ Luke xi. 2.

without them. "The graces of prayer," says Bennett, "faith, love, humility, contrition, resignation, holy desires, and devout affections, are the life and soul of prayer, and much more to be regarded than this or that mode of outward performance.

Bishop Wilkins, after allowing the use of forms for the young and weaker Christian, both in the family and the closet, and giving him a caution as to the necessity of being "narrowly watchful over his own heart, for fear of that lip service and formality to which in such cases we are more especially exposed," adds as follows: "But, for any one so to sit down and satisfy himself with this book of prayer, or prescribed form, as to go no farther, this were still to remain in his infancy, and not to grow up in his new nature. This would be as if a man who had once need of crutches, should always afterwards make use of them, and so necessitate himself to a continual impotency.

"And if it be a fault not to strive and labor after this gift, much more is it to jeer and despise it, by the name of 'extempore prayer,' and 'praying by the Spirit,' which expressions are, for the most part, a sign of a profane heart, altogether a stranger to the power and comfort of this duty."

And after giving some directions to help his readers in the performance of prayer, he says, "It will not be difficult to him that shall attempt it after this manner to pray in private without a form. And it is not easy to express what a vast difference a man may find in respect of inward comfort and satisfaction, between those private prayers that are thus conceived from the affections, and those prescribed forms which we say by rote, or read out of books."

Indeed, an ability and readiness to express our thoughts to God, in all the various parts of prayer, in the manner most fit to profit our own souls, and the souls of those who join us is not only a valuable gift, but a delightful privilege which every Christian should seek to gain.

It has been found useful in private prayer, to consider previously the things which you have to mention, and to put them down under the different parts of prayer. Thus, have you sinned by vain and trifling conversation in company? place that under Confession. Do you fear a particular temptation? place the desire for strength to resist it, under Petition. This previous arrangement has been found to keep

the mind more fixed on its work, and it also gives you the advantage of reflecting afterwards on the subjects of your prayer.

It may be observed, that the Scriptures supply us with many beautiful models of prayer.* Some have found it useful to take a Psalm or chapter for a form of prayer; such as the 103d Psalm for praise, the 51st Psalm for confession, the 9th of Daniel for intercession, the 12th of Romans for petition. And again, others have found it edifying and profitable daily to repeat the Te Deum. God blesses us in various ways when we endeavor, in simplicity and sincerity, to seek and enjoy his presence, and obtain his favor.

As prayer is a duty of such immense importance, and of such continual recurrence, we shall dwell more fully on the subject matter of our prayers under the following Section:

Sect. V.—*On the various parts of Prayer.*

It will appear, from what has been said already, that no form of prayer can, perhaps, adequately express all our private, personal, and particular wants. It will, therefore, be useful to have our minds so furnished with information on the various parts of prayer, that we may, orderly, and with propriety and readiness, express every want before God.

The parts which are essential in our prayers, may be comprehended under the four heads of Confession, Petition, Intercession, and Thanksgiving. It will be useful to have these four particulars in your mind, and to bring them more or less into every prayer. Perhaps this four-fold division may have been deduced from the passage, (1 Tim. ii. 1,) where the Apostle says, "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made." Our sins, our wants, the wants of others, and the mercies of God, are the great subjects for every prayer.

Bishop Wilkins has given a view of the whole subject in the following Analysis of Prayer:

CONFESSION.

Acknowledgment of sins by
Enumeration.
Original, in our inward man.
in our outward man.
Actual, both against Law and Gospel.
National and personal.

* See Hosea xiv. 1, 2, &c.

Omission and commission.
Thought, word, and deed
Aggravation of them in general, by multitude and greatness
in special, the kinds of sin.
in particular, the circumstances.
Punishments of them external, in our bodies, friends, estates, and names.
internal, in respect of blessings, natural and spiritual.
eternal, of loss and pain.

PETITION.

SUPPLICATION FOR OURSELVES.
Deprecation against the evil of sin.
in respect of its guilt for pardon, and for the evidence of pardon.
of its power.
against the evil of temptation by our corrupt nature the Devil, and the world.
against the evil of punishment.
Comprecation.
For spiritual good in the sanctification of our nature, both inward and outward man.
in the obedience of our lives, by the performance, continuance, and increase in the duties both of the Law and the Gospel.
For temporal good, in the provision for us, and protection of us.
INTERCESSION FOR OTHERS.
In general—The Catholic Church.
In special—Ordinary for the nations uncalled, as Infidels, Jews, &c.
the nations called—our own nation, allies.
Occasional, in times of War, Famine, Pestilence, &c.
In particular—Ordinary for all relations, public or political.
private or economical.
friendship, or enmity.
neighborhood.
Occasiona., for the afflicted in mind, body, or estate

THANKSGIVING.

Mercies to be enumerated.
Ordinary Temporal, Private, as being, nature, birth, education preservation, souls, bodies, friends, names, estates, &c.
Public, as fruitful, healthful, and peaceable seasons.
Spiritual, election, redemption, vocation, justification, sanctification, both as to its parts and means, hope of glory.
Occasional, for some particular preservation, recov-

ery, or deliverance of ourselves, or others, in soul, or body.

Mercies to be amplified
Generally by their multitude.
greatness in respect of the giver, and as to the receiver.
their continuance.
particularly by their circumstances, degrees, contraries.

Intermingled with all our prayers should be the most profound, and unfeigned *adoration* of that great God whom we worship. Of every prayer we should aim to be enabled to say with Nebuchadnezzar, "I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation."*

The order in which you bring forward the various parts of prayer, is of little importance, and may depend on the present state of your mind. Are you burdened by sin? begin by confessing your sins. Are you rejoicing in God's goodness? pour out your heart first in grateful thanksgivings, and then confess your unworthiness of every good. "Is any afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms?"†

We will now enlarge upon each of the preceding parts of prayer.

I. CONFESSION.

Under this head, express your present feelings respecting your sinfulness and guilt. In private prayer you should be minute, and full in confessing sins, and the circumstances attending them. The more particular you are in enumerating those sins of which conscience accuses you, the more you dwell on the aggravations of your offences, and condemn, and abase yourself before God, the more He will lift you up.

Acknowledge then His spotless holiness, His almighty power, His perfect justice, and that you cannot approach with comfort or confidence, but through the advocate of sinners, Jesus Christ the righteous: and with the feeling of the publican, cry only for mercy.

Do you feel your continual proneness and propensity to sin? Confess your *original corruption*.—You are a

* Dan. iv. 34. † James v. 13.

"transgressor from the womb;"* "shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin;"† "by nature dead in trespasses and sins, and the child of wrath."‡ Mark also the progress of sin, the sins of childhood and of riper years. You may join Jeremiah in saying, "We have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers ever unto this day."§ Observe how this corruption has defiled your *understanding*, so that you may have often to apply the description, not liking "to retain God in their knowledge,"‖ to yourself. Even your *conscience* will, at all times, appear to be "past feeling, being seared as with a hot iron."¶ Your *affections* have been fixed on evil things, (Matt. xv. 19,) and you can say from experience, "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked."** The *will* has become a servant to sin, (2 Pet. ii. 19,) "brought in bondage" unto corruption. The *memory* has been forgetful of what is good, and retentive only of evil. (Heb. ii. 1.)

The powers of the soul have thus been corrupted in the fall; nor have the *members of the body* been less estranged from God. The eye is "full of adultery, pride, and envy."†† The ear "uncircumcised,"‡‡ often open to slander, malignity, and sin; and often shut against divine truth. The tongue is "a world of iniquity, defiling the whole body."§§ The mouth "full of cursing and bitterness." The feet "swift in the ways of sin."‖‖ In short, all the members of the body have been yielded up as "instruments of unrighteousness unto sin."¶¶ Those who know their own hearts, will be ready to acknowledge, that the seeds of the worst and most aggravated wickedness which have been practised by other men, lie hid therein, (Matt. xv. 19,) and are only restrained from bursting forth by God's grace. The pious Martyr Bradford, when he saw a poor criminal led to execution, exclaimed, "there, but for the grace of God, goes John Bradford." He knew that the same evil principles were in his own heart which had brought the criminal to that shameful end.

But should you, from ignorance of your own heart, be ready to think well of yourself, consider your *actual trans-*

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* Isa. xlviii. 8. † Ps. li. 5. ‡ Eph. ii. 5.
§ Jer. iii. 25. ‖ Rom. i. 28. ¶ 1 Tim. iv. 2.
** Jer. xvii. 9. †† 2 Pet. ii. 14. ‡‡ Acts vii. 51.
§§ James iii. 6. ‖‖ Rom iii. 15. ¶¶ Rom. vi. 13.

gressions. Go through the ten commandments. See, in the first, how often you have loved the creature more than the Creator, and been among those who are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." See, in the second, how often you have disregarded, or slightly performed his holy worship. In the third, observe your profanation of his holy name by an irreverent and careless use of it; and of his holy character by unholy words, or an unholy life. In the fourth, notice all your sins relating to the sabbath. In the fifth, your sins respecting your relatives, as parents, brothers, sisters, and others. In the sixth, your evil thoughts of others, remembering, "he that hateth his brother is a murderer." In the seventh, your licentious imaginations—"whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." By the eighth, you may bring to your recollection your partiality or hypocrisy in your dealings and transactions; by the ninth, your duplicity and want of truth; and, by the tenth, your covetousness and love of worldly things.

And in order to discover more of the full extent of your sinfulness, remember, that you are accountable to God, not only for *sins committed*, but, for *duties omitted;* and that your *sins in thought*, as well as those *in word and action*, expose you to the displeasure of God;* "the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord."

These are sins more especially against the law of God. But in *sins relating to the Gospel*, you will see more of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and thence have a more abundant cause of penitent confession. Sin, when you have heard and received the Gospel, becomes peculiarly hateful, as it is sin against love itself. Hence, unbelief, impenitence, and self-righteousness, are so burdensome to the mind of the believer, and so much humble him before his God.

Any unbelief in, or doubt about the love and grace of God, after such displays of that love as the Bible discovers, confirmed in so many ways, and by such powerful and numerous witnesses, especially after those gracious deliverances which we have often experienced, is no small sin. It shows the Christian how he merits his Savior's upbraid-

* Prov. xv. 26.

ings of unbelief and hardness of heart; "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken."* He will often be disposed to ask himself, "where is that simple reliance on the blood, righteousness, intercession, and grace of Christ, which should give the soul continual peace and joy?" He will be humbled also by the mixture of self-righteousness which appears in all his attempts to glorify God. He will often seem to himself, like the Jews, "who, going about to establish their own righteousness, did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God;"† and this mark of remaining pride, and self-conceit will be confessed and bewailed. He will be greatly affected by the hardness and impenitence of his heart. The consideration that the goodness of God should have led him to repentance, and yet that he is so little affected, or moved by it, so often apparently totally insensible to it, will sometimes come home to his heart with such effect, as to bring him to the throne of grace in the most penitent confessions of a broken and contrite spirit. The particularity of our confession in all these things is of great importance to the moving and stirring up of our dull affections.

These *sins* will be seen to be *aggravated* by the consideration of the majesty, mercy, and holiness of that God against whom they have been committed, and of the tendency of all sin. The Christian remembers how it has debased the soul of man, the fairest and most glorious image of God on earth; how it nailed the only Son of God on the tree; how it causes every sorrow here, and eternal sorrow in the life to come.

The *multitude of our sins*, will be another part of our confession; we shall say of them with David, "They are more than the hairs of mine head."‡ "Who can tell how oft he offendeth?"§ or with Ezra, "Our iniquities are increased over us, and our trespasses are grown up unto the heavens."‖

There are also *some particularly grievous sins*, of which conscience justly accuses us. Sins which, however now they may be forgotten, caused peculiar uneasiness and anxiety when they were first committed. I mean sins committed, more or less, against light and knowledge,

* Luke xxiv. 25. † Rom. x. 3. ‡ Ps. xl. 12.
§ Ps. xix. 12. ‖ Ezra ix. 6

against the checks of conscience, against the motions of the Spirit of God, though we knew the love of a bleeding Savior, and the Father of mercies. Sins committed more or less presumptuously and wilfully, deliberately and repeatedly.

Feeling this, you will be ready to *acknowledge the punishment due on account of your sins*, and to say with Jeremiah, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassion fail not."* We have sinned in the enjoyment of every blessing; and it is right and meet we should confess that God would be just in depriving us of them, or punishing us in the use of them.

The imperfection and *defective character of all our obedience*, should also be plainly confessed. How slight and transient is our repentance!—how slow have we been to be reconciled to those with whom we have been at enmity! Have we yet fully made restitution to those we may have wronged in any way, either as to their character, their comfort, or their property? by negligence and carelessness, sins have been more than half allowed: and how often our watchfulness has become relaxed, and we have thus fallen into temptation! Or again, how little have our evil tempers been subdued! Even "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Isa. lxiv. 6.†

The true ground of a right confession of our sins, is a just knowledge of the holy law of God, and of our hearts and lives. Self-examination is then absolutely necessary in order to an enlightened and feeling confession of sin. This will keep us from their mistake who confess little sins much, and altogether neglect greater; who confess those sins which they seldom commit, and neglect those into which they fall continually and frequently.

II. PETITION.

From confessing our sins, we may easily and naturally pass to the earnest request of those blessings which sinners want; and this, either by

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* Lam. iii. 22.

† A pious person found a great advantage in keeping a list of those sins to which he had found himself specially tempted, and praying daily and particularly for strength against them.

A profession of shame and sorrow for so many sins; or, of purpose to renounce our own righteousness; or,
A desire of grace for greater strictness in future; or,
A brief application to ourselves of the many promises of mercy to those that repent and believe.

First, ask for those things which concern *the averting of evil.*

The great thing which we need is divine mercy. When David had a peculiar strong sense of his sinfulness upon his mind, he begins his prayer with earnest and repeated petitions for mercy. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions."* The penitent publican asked only for mercy. We are to approach the throne of grace for this end, that we "may obtain mercy." When the Apostle Paul sums up the benefit which he derived from his conversion, he does it in these words, "I obtained mercy."

Mercy, good Lord, mercy I ask,
This is the total sum,
For mercy, Lord, is all my suit,
Lord, let thy mercy come.

If, confessing our sins, we plead guilty to all the charge that is against us, in a spirit of humiliation and godly sorrow, and in dependence upon the promise, "that whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy," we need not doubt about a favorable reception. Jesus Christ has assured us, "him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

Sinners need deliverance from the *guilt* and from the *power of sin.* With respect to the *guilt of sin*, seeing that believers are "justified freely by the grace of God through the redemption of Jesus Christ," you should pray for an interest in this justification. Urge the mercy of God, for "with the Lord there is mercy."† Plead the merits of Christ "who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities."‡ "He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."§ Urge the many and faithful promises—"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and

* Ps. li. 1. † Ps. cxxx. 7. ‡ Isa. liii. 5.
§ 2 Cor. v. 21

just to forgive us our sins."* "Only acknowledge thine iniquity."†

You should also seek for more than mere pardon; I mean a knowledge of being pardoned and accepted in Christ. This is promised, and may, and should, be obtained: ask, then, with David, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." Pray that "being justified by faith," you may "have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"‡ and be "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance." Nor be satisfied till you can say, "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."§ Thus seek to have the full assurance of faith and hope. Heb. vi. 11; x. 22.

With respect to deliverance from the *power of sin*, remember that Jesus Christ is "exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance as well as remission of sins:" no avowedly impenitent sinner is a pardoned sinner. Pray then, that "the grace of God which bringeth salvation, may teach you to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world:" pray, that the Savior may purify you, unto himself, that you may be found among his peculiar people, "zealous of good works." Various pleas may be urged to obtain this deliverance. Christ gave himself for this end; and he says, "herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."

You are surrounded with numerous *temptations*. Pray that God would "not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able to bear." "The *heart* is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" pray that it may be freed from all guile, deceit, and hypocrisy, purified by faith in Jesus.‖ You are in an ensnaring *world*, pray that you may "not be conformed" to it, but be "transformed by the renewing of your mind."¶ "The *devil* goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour;" ask then that "the God of peace would bruise Satan under your feet shortly."**

You have deserved various punishments, and have therefore reason to pray that no evil may befall you, neither any

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* 1 John i. 9. † Jer. iii. 13. ‡ Rom. v. 1.
§ Rom. viii. 16. ‖ Acts xv. 9. ¶ Rom. xii. 2.
** Rom. xvi. 20.

plague come nigh your dwelling;* you have reason to ask with David, "cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me."†

To these prayers for the averting of evil, add Petitions for those good things which we need.

Spiritual blessings are the things of first and main importance. The direction is to seek these things *first*. It is not inaptly observed, "the petition for heavenly things is the only key that must open the door to our petition for temporals." The first spiritual blessing is "a new heart and a new spirit."‡ Pray, then, that "you may put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."§ With what sins does your conscience charge you? go through all the particulars, and pray for the opposite graces. Are you proud? pray for humility. Are you worldly? for heavenly-mindedness. Is there any grace which you specially need? pray for it. Is there any sin into which you are more apt to fall? pray to be delivered from it. Is there any duty or trial before you? ask for wisdom, grace, and strength, in that particular circumstance. Keep minutes of these things, for your own use.

Your heart, in short, is not in a right state, till it be your fixed purpose to devote yourself entirely to God, and you long to have all the powers of your mind, the affections of your soul, and the members of your body, wholly given up to his service. St. Paul prays for the Thessalonians, (v. 23,) "the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." He beseeches the Romans to "present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God." He reminds the Corinthians, "ye are not your own, but bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's." The love of God must excite and animate you to this. Pray, then, that "the love of God" may be "shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost."‖

Love is the fulfilling of the law, the most excellent gift.¶ Desire, then, that you may be taught of God to love

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* Ps. cix. 10. † Ps. li. 11. ‡ Ezek. xxxvi. 26.
§ Eph. iv 24. ‖ Rom. v. 5. ¶ 1 Cor. xiii.

others;* to "be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another.†

Christians who feel that the precious deposit of Christ's glory is in a peculiar way intrusted to them, will especially pray that they may be enabled in all things to "adorn the doctrine of God their Savior:" that they may be "holy in all manner of conversation; walking worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing;" that they may "give all diligence, and add to their faith, virtue‡—knowledge—temperance—patience—godliness—brotherly kindness—and charity."§

The Christian need not confine himself to petitions for spiritual blessings. *Temporal blessings* are promised, and may be sought of God. Whatever good thing you may want, relative to your earthly comfort; whatever direction, provision, or protection, you need concerning your body, your calling, your name, your estate, or your friends; whatever your desires be, "in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known unto God." Yet, in asking for temporal blessings, it will ever become us not to "seek great things for ourselves:"‖ and to say with our Savior, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." The prayer of Agur is a suitable prayer for us.¶ "Remove from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

Do we not deprive ourselves of many temporal comforts by not bringing our necessities of this kind before God? Many of the examples of prayer which we have in the Scriptures, are for temporal blessings. Only remember to ask for them in submission to the will of God, and the better to enable you to serve him.

Relative duties should ever occupy a place in our prayers. As ministers, that we may be faithful "stewards of the mysteries of God,"** "by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God,"†† making "full proof of our ministry, rightly

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* 1 Thess. iv. 9. † Rom. xii. 10.
‡ Strength or courage, in the work of Christ. § 2 Pet. i. 5, 7.
‖ Jer. xlv. 25. ¶ Prov. xxx. 7, 9. ** 1 Cor. iv. 1.
†† 2 Cor. iv. 2.

dividing the word of truth,"* and in all things showing a "pattern of good works." As hearers and people, that we may esteem "those that may labor among us, and are over us in the Lord, very highly in love for their works' sake:"† that we may "receive the truth in the love of it, and be saved."

As husbands, that you may "love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church;"‡ giving "honor unto them as the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life."§

As wives, that you may "submit yourselves to your own husbands, as unto the Lord,"‖ "having the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit."¶

As parents, to "bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,"** teaching the word of God diligently unto them;†† "chastening thy son while there is hope."‡‡

As children, to "honor your father and mother,"§§ obeying your "parents well in all things."‖‖

As masters, giving unto your "servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a master in heaven."¶¶

As servants, that we may be "obedient to them that are our masters according to the flesh, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart."***

As magistrates, remembering, "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God."†††

As subjects, praying "for kings, and for all that are in authority," that we "may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty,"‡‡‡ "rendering to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due,"§§§ "being subject to principalities and powers, obeying magistrates, and being ready to every good work."‖‖‖

This may be considered as comprehending the general

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* 2 Tim. ii. 15
† 1 Thess. v. 12, 13.
‡ Eph. v. 25.
§ 1 Pet. iii. 7.
‖ Eph. v. 22.
¶ 1 Pet. iii. 1, 4.
** Eph. vi. 4.
†† Deut. vi. 7.
‡‡ Prov. xix. 18.
§§ Exod. xx. 12.
‖‖ Col. iii. 20.
¶¶ Col. iv. 1.
*** Eph. vi. 5. 6.
††† 2 Sam. xxiii. 3.
‡‡‡ 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2
§§§ Rom. xiii. 7.
‖‖‖ Titus, iii. 1

course of Petition in private, morning and evening. There are, however, occasional and special seasons when we need the help of God, and should obtain it by more than ordinary diligence in prayer.

Have you by any sermon you have heard, or in any other way, been led to feel that you are yet unconverted? give a stated time to pray for conversion. Have you backslidden from God? give more time than ordinary to ask of God to heal and restore you. "remember from whence thou art fallen; repent, and do the first works." Are all your Christian graces drooping, languishing, and ready to die? seek, in a special season of prayer, that grace of God, which can alone quicken and restore them to primitive vigor and beauty. Are you about to receive the Lord's supper? prepare for it by retirement, meditation, self examination, and much prayer. Are you in any respect changing your circumstances or situation, or about to undertake any important work? here is a call on you to seek wisdom of God. Remember the example which our Lord has left us. Before he chose his twelve Apostles, "he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God."* Should you be in great distress either of body or mind, imitate also his example: retire from the world as he did to the garden of Gethsemane, to pour out the heart in secret prayer. Express your wants to God in the same simple manner that Jacob did in his distress.†

In short, new and peculiar circumstances require us, if we would escape temptation, danger, and sin, to be then more instant in seeking aid of God. And we may appeal to the experience of Christians, that when they have done so, all has gone on well; difficulties have been removed, or they have been carried comfortably through them; the grace of God has been magnified in their weakness.

Our petitions should be enforced by such arguments as we can use. Of this part of prayer, called *pleading*, we have perpetual examples in the word of God. The conclusion of the Lord's prayer, exemplifies its importance, and shows that the most powerful pleas we can urge, are to be drawn from the attributes and perfections of God. Humble, holy, and earnest pleading with our God, tends to make the desire more fervent, and to strengthen our faith. Observe

* Luke vi. 12. † Gen. xxxii. 9, 12.

how Moses pleads,* how Joshua entreats,† how Jehoshaphat lays the whole case before God.‡

But let not our prayers be selfish, or confined to our own wants; Christians are "fellow members of one body," all the members of which should ever care for each other. Christians are the "salt of the earth," and should by their intercessions procure its safety and happiness. We proceed, then, to consider another part of our prayers.

III. INTERCESSION.

The Church of Christ, in general, throughout the world, should have the first place in our intercessions. We should "pray for the peace of Jerusalem,"§ that "grace" may "be with all them that love the Lord Jesus in sincerity,"¶ that all that believe in him may "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel."‖

We should also especially pray for the blessing of God on that particular branch of the Church of Christ to which we individually belong. As members of the Church of England, let us ask "that it may please God to illuminate all Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, with true knowledge and understanding of his word, and that both by their preaching and living they may set it forth and show it accordingly." The ministers under whom you are instructed have a particular claim to your prayers, that they may be "able ministers of the New Testament." Dr. Owen remarks on this subject, "The prayers of the meanest saints may be useful to the greatest apostle, both with respect to their persons and the discharge of their office." Hence it was usual with the apostle to desire the prayers of the churches to whom he wrote.** For in mutual prayer for each other consists one principal part of the communion of saints, wherein they are helpful to one another in all times, places, and conditions. It is the especial duty of the church to pray for them who are eminently useful in the work of the ministry.

The increase of faithful ministers generally should be

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* Exod. xxxii. 11, 13.
† Josh. vii. 8, 9.
‡ 2 Chron. xx. 6, 12.
§ Ps. cxxii. 6.
‖ Eph. vi. 24.
¶ Phil. i. 27
** Heb. xiii. 18; 2 Cor. i. 11; Ephes. vi. 19; Col. iv. 3, 2 Thess. iii. 1.

constantly insisted on; "pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his vineyard," that he would give the word, and great may be the company of preachers.*

The *enlargement of the Church of Christ* should be another topic to be much brought forward. We should pray for the conversion of *the Jews*, that at length the veil may be removed from their eyes, and they may behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and "look unto" him "whom they have pierced, and mourn."

The *Gentiles* require our prayers. "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession," is the promise made to Christ, and in him to the church. While we pray, then, that all Israel may be saved, we should also pray that God would bring in "the fullness of the Gentiles, that the earth may be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

The *nation* to which we belong, should have our prayers; that we may be a people "fearing God and working righteousness." We are taught to pray "for kings, and all in authority."† We should ask, also, that God would "instruct our magistrates, and teach our senators wisdom;"‡ that "judgment may run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream;"§ that there may be peace on earth" and "good will towards men." Our national sins, our national wants, and our national mercies, will furnish the best, the only true patriot, the Christian, with abundant matter for prayer.

The dear and interesting *family circle* of parents, brothers, sisters, wife, children, servants, Christian friends, ("brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh,"‖) and your neighbors, and connexions, will daily be gathered and assembled before the throne of grace, will be included in the comprehensive and effectionate embrace of Christian prayer. "Though there be no reason," says Mr. Fuller, "why God should save our children, relations, or friends, before others, yet there is a reason why we should seek their salvation, because they are particularly put under our care, or stand in connexion with us." David's prayer for his

* Ps. lxviii. 11. † 1 Tim. ii. 2. ‡ Ps. cv 22.
§ Amos, v. 24. ‖ Rom. ix 3

house is suitable for heads of families: "therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee; for thou, O Lord, hast spoken it; and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever."

The expansive benevolence of true intercession will also lead you to remember your *enemies*, blessing them that curse and revile you, and doing the best good to those that hate you most. The duty of praying for any with whom we may unfortunately, from whatever cause, be at enmity, is very important. It prepares us to receive ill treatment in a right spirit; to be very slow to suspect others of designing an injury; and, when their design is evident, it disposes us to return good for evil. O, if every Christian did but pray for others, instead of returning evil for evil, and coldness, suspicion, and jealousy, for fancied injuries, what a change it would produce in the state of the world!

The *circumstances* of others should be considered. Are any afflicted in mind, body, or estate? we should "weep with those that weep," and pray that the chastening, however grievous now, may "yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby;"* that they may find God "a present help in time of trouble;"† and that their affliction may work out for them "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Some may be "dead in trespasses and sins;" others just beginning to know the truth; others "weak in the faith;" others backsliding; and some happy few "strong in the Lord." You will find a blessing to your own soul, in spreading their several cases and circumstances before God in prayer and praise.

You may not be able every day to dwell on all these things, however desirable it may be not wholly to omit them. The example of an eminent servant of Christ, (the Rev. Mr. Romaine,) may here be recommended. "He devoted two hours every Friday to particular intercession with God for his friends. He had their names written down on paper, and used to walk about his room, mentioning them one by one, and specifying their wants as far as he knew them, with earnest supplication."

The duty of praying for friends is so important, that it

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* Heb. xii. 11 † Ps. xlvi. 1

calls for particular notice; especially when we consider, now little in general we lay to heart the state of our unconverted relatives and friends, and their tremendous exposure to the divine wrath. Let us remember how keen will be the anguish on the death of a relation for whom no prayer nor exertion has been made; and how it will grieve us that many precious opportunities have been lost. While on the other hand, by a constant practice of intercession, we may become emboldened to perform, in a Christian spirit, the difficult duties of solemn warning, reproof, and a full and free declaration of their danger. Remember that Job's prayers for his friends were to be peculiarly prevalent. God declares, "My servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept."*

The Scriptures furnish us with many affecting examples of intercessory prayer, as Daniel for his country;† St. Paul for the churches of Christ; and our Lord for his enemies, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Bishop Hall makes the following encouraging remarks on intercessory prayer: "Every Christian freely lays himself out by prayer for the benefit of his fellow members.

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* Job, xlii. 8.

A practice of Col. Gardiner's, is worthy of our remembrance. Doddridge says, when he received a letter from any of his Christian friends which particularly affected his heart, he could not stay till the stated return of his devotional hour, but immediately retired to pray for them, and to give vent to those religious emotions of mind, which such a correspondence raised. How invaluable was such a friend! Mr. Sheppard, in his valuable "Thoughts on Private Devotion," after stating the importance of daily though brief intercession for those *most* near and dear, gives the following useful hint. "With respect to other friends, it seems most natural and expedient, that our prayers should be but occasional, in order that they may then be the more prolonged. There are few, even of our best friends, whom we can visit daily. How happy would some be, if they could meet even yearly! But if we made it a rule of piety and kindness daily to offer up particular intercession for *one* individual, or one household, and thus successively for each, these secret visits of the heart would in many instances be far more frequent than our personal intercourse can be. Amidst the inclemency of winter, or in the chamber of sickness, we might still make the swift excursions, and offer the best, though unheard salutations of Christian affection." See page 193 and 194, 2d Edition.

† Dan. ix.

Each member of Christ's church sues for all. Neither can any one be shut out from partaking the benefit of the prayers of all God's saints upon earth. There is a certain spiritual traffic of piety betwixt all God's children; wherein they exchange prayers with each other, not regarding number so much as weight. Am I weak in spirit and faint in my supplications? I have no less share in the most fervent prayers of the holiest suppliants, than in my own: all the vigor that is in the most ardent hearts, supplies my defects: while there is life in their faithful devotions, I cannot go away unblessed."

The more religion advances in our hearts, the more time we shall be disposed to give to intercession; which as it is the most disinterested and benevolent part of Christian prayer, so it most likens us to our Divine Master. The Christian has sometimes found the presence of God, and enjoyed that communion with him, in this part of his devotions, which he in vain sought for in confession, petition, or praise."*

After confessing our sins, and praying for future blessings for ourselves and for others, and after expressing our confidence of obtaining our requests by our experience of former mercies, we ought to be naturally led to acknowledge those mercies and blessings which we have already received.

IV. THANKSGIVING.

Prayer and praise have been compared to respiration. By prayer the Christian draws in a happy life from heaven; and by praise he breathes it back again to him who gave it.

When the heart is right with God, and he opens our "lips to show forth his praise," thanksgiving is a truly delightful part of our devotion. And here what a boundless subject opens before us! That "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity," should condescend to be mindful of man, and visit him, may well excite our adoring wonder and praise.

How numerous are our *temporal blessings!* Our crea-

* Prayers for the dead are plainly contrary to various statements in God's word, and the express doctrine of the Church of England See the Homily on Prayer

tion, our education, our daily preservation, the repose of the night, and the strength given for the day, demand continued and persevering praise.

God has given us a soul capable of knowing, loving, and rejoicing in him through all eternity. He has given us a body by which we may serve and glorify him. You have, perhaps, the free use of every member of your body, the enjoyment of every sense, and the full possession of every faculty of your mind; and do not these or any of them, call for your grateful acknowledgments?

He gives you kind friends, and favor with them. He furnishes you with that provision from day to day, which is needful for you: bread to eat, clothes to cover you, a house in which to dwell, and a fire to warm you. He makes peace in your borders, so that no evil befalls you, and gives you health and strength. Or if in any thing it be otherwise, he does not afflict us for his pleasure, but "for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness;" and in any case, you are yet "the living, the living to praise him."

What numberless temporal blessings do these things comprehend, and how astonishing is the mercy by which they are granted, and continued to sinful and rebellious creatures! "O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"*

Yet how small are these when compared with *spiritual blessings!* "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ. He is the channel, through which the rich stream of mercy flows unto us; and, how needful, how invaluable, are those blessings which he procures and bestows!

"We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Hereby the almighty, holy, and righteous God, who has declared that he "will not acquit the guilty," is yet "just and faithful to forgive us our sins." And shall we not praise Him who sent his Son to die for man? and Him, who "came into the world to save sinners?" In Christ, God is our portion, and all his perfections are engaged to supply our wants, and make us happy.

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* Ps. cvii. 8

Mark the first beginnings and the progress of this happy state.—"God hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love;"* and "in the fullness of time he sent forth his Son," and we were redeemed by his precious blood, "who gave himself a ransom for all."

Then, through his mercy, we were "called with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace:" and, "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, we have been justified freely by his grace, that we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

Again, as one of his people, you have been sanctified by the Holy Spirit; "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." For this end God has given you his word, his ministers, his sacraments, and intercourse with his people; all the means of grace, and his Spirit to make those means efficient. Is it nothing that you were born and live in a Christian land, "the land of Goshen," the land of spiritual, as well as earthly freedom, peace, and joy? What mercies are included in these things!

You have also in Christ, "the hope of glory;" the lively, the assured hope of future glory: of an "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." Well may we say with David, "His mercy endureth for ever!"

And, if you cannot feel that you enjoy any of these spiritual mercies, you may yet be thankful for the forbearance and long-suffering of God: "it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not."

These are general mercies common to all Christians, but each one has received special and peculiar mercies, answers to prayers, deliverances from danger, trouble, or distress, protection in journeyings; strength and grace for particular occasions: these things call for thanksgiving.

And with these mercies to ourselves, Christian benevolence and sympathy will teach us also to "rejoice with them that do rejoice," and to praise God for his mercies to his church and mankind in general: for that bright day of mercy in which we live, and for all the blessed signs of

* Eph. i. 4.

the times concerning the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom among the Heathen.

Thus shall we be disposed, in reviewing God's mercies, to say, "Many, O Lord, my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to usward: they cannot be reckoned up in order to thee. If I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered."* "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doth wondrous things, and blessed be his glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory."

Yet we must say with the son of Sirach, of this duty of praising our God—"We may speak much, and yet come short; wherefore, in sum, He is all.—When ye glorify God, exalt him as much as you can, for even yet will he far exceed: and when ye exalt him, put forth all your strength, and be not weary: for ye can never go far enough. —Who can magnify *Him* as he is?"

How much do we neglect, or how coldly do we practise the duty of thanksgiving! In reading the 107th Psalm we may observe how readily in trouble all cry to God, without exhortation; but when delivered from their trouble, they need to be earnestly invited to thankfulness. Yet it is often enjoined; we are called to it by the daily providence of God; in nothing do we enjoy God more fully and properly; the discharge of it prepares for greater mercies, the neglect of it brings just rebukes; and it is an excellent preparation for heaven, where the songs of joyful praise are ever ascending to the Father of mercies.

Let us then say with David, "While I live will I praise the Lord, I will sing praises unto my God while I have my being."

> I'll praise my Maker with my breath;
> And when my voice is lost in death,
> Praise shall employ my noblest powers
> My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
> While life, and thought, and being last,
> Or immortality endures.

We should keep a list of the more remarkable mercies which we have received from our earliest years, and frequently review it. If a person be dwelling perpetually on

* Ps. xl. 5; cxxxix. 17, 18.

his wants, he cannot be thankful; but a catalogue of the blessings which God has bestowed upon him, often reviewed, would sweeten the spirit, and tend to fill him with gratitude and love.

Thanksgiving, as well as every other part of prayer, must be offered up in the name of Christ, acknowledging that all our blessings flow through him,* and expecting the acceptance of our praise only on the ground of his mediation.†

It will not be possible or advisable to dwell on, or enumerate all the particulars that have been mentioned in every prayer which we make. Yet the leading subjects, and the amplifying of those parts with which your hearts are most affected, will form the substance of your prayers, in "letting your requests be made known unto God, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving."

There is a happy connexion between all the parts of prayer; and the full discharge of one leads on to another. It may be thus illustrated. By an ingenious contrivance near some of the collieries, and in other places, where the ground allows of it, the full and empty carriages or vessels being connected together, those which have been emptied, are from time to time raised up an ascent, by the descending of those that have been filled. In this way let the descent of God's mercies, and the gifts bestowed on us out of his fullness, in answer to former prayer, raise your empty vessels to receive again and again, from his inexhaustible treasury, all that you need. Say, with David, "Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."

It may be advantageous not always to confine yourselve to the same parts of worship, or the same order. Watts enumerates the following eight parts of prayer: Invocation, Adoration, Confession, Petition, Pleading, Self-dedication Thanksgiving, and Blessing.

We may occasionally be assisted in our devotion by thes more extended and enlarged parts and divisions; only take heed, lest in the use of them, our prayers should become too artificial, and be merely the work of the head instead of the feeling of the heart. Yet Watts justly observes,

* Eph. i. 3.

† Col. iii. 17.

that if young Christians did not give themselves up to a loose habit of speaking what is uppermost, but attempted to learn the holy skill of prayer, by a recollection of its several parts, and disposing their thoughts into a suitable method, they would be more successful in attaining this great gift.

These parts of prayer will be more plain by the following example of each part from the Scriptures.

INVOCATION.

"Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God, for unto thee will I pray."

ADORATION.

"Thou art God, and none else; thy name alone is Jehovah, the Most High—Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty which was, and is, and is to come."

CONFESSION.

"I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight."

PETITION.

"Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; renew a right spirit within me.

"Cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary."

PLEADING.

"For thy mercies' sake, O Lord, save me. Our fathers cried unto thee, and were delivered."

SELF-DEDICATION.

"I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments."

THANKSGIVING.

"My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.

"O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name, who forgiveth all thy sins, who healeth all thy dis-

eases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies."

BLESSING.

"Blessed be his glorious name for ever.

"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

O that every reader might be inclined, and by the Spirit of God enabled, to enter on a full and enlarged practice of private prayer! A continual spirit of devotion is the highest attainment of man; it is the root which draws up the sap and life of the tree of righteousness, and thus causes it to bring forth all that fruit which glorifies God and benefits man. Hence, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith, and temperance, all godliness, and all true excellence. Believe me, it will be worth many sacrifices and struggles to gain the spirit of prayer, guarding against trusting in your own strength and self-righteousness, and remembering, in prayer we put off our own righteousness and pride, our wisdom and riches, and confess our sinfulness and poverty.* We shall then find constant prayer bring in the richest return of all our labors and employments.

While this account of the various parts of prayer has been given, it is readily admitted that the purest private prayer is above form and method. It is the expression of a full heart, pouring out the inmost desires of the soul before God, in the most natural and obvious words.

It was a saying of the Martyr Bradford, "that he would never leave a duty, till he had brought his heart into the frame of the duty; he would not leave confession of sin, till his heart was broken for sin; he would not leave petitioning for grace, till his heart was quickened and enlivened in a hopeful expectation of more grace; he would not leave the rendering of thanks, till his heart was enlarged with the sense of the mercies which he enjoyed, and quickened in the return of praise."

* "Prayer is a sweet travelling and trafficking of the soul betwixt emptiness and fullness, betwixt want and all-sufficiency, and betwixt our inability to help ourselves and his ability to help us."—A. Gray on Prayer.

And surely every part of our duty, as it is brought before us in the word of God, shows us both our guilt and our weakness. But still the perfection of that rule must be declared. It is calculated to stimulate us to higher efforts, and to humble us in lower prostration of soul, under a sense of our so frequently coming short of the mark set before us.

SECT. IV.—*Brief Observations on the Lord's Prayer.*

The Prayer which our Lord gave to his disciples is not only a perfect form of prayer, but also an admirable pattern and guide. It is in one place introduced to our notice, thus, "When ye pray, say,"* and in another, "After this manner pray ye."† It is so full and comprehensive, that we generally find, after our longest prayers, that there is something asked for in the Lord's prayer, which we had not before requested.

Its method is simple and clear. It consists of three parts:

I. *An Introduction*, expressing the goodness and greatness of Him to whom we speak.

"Our Father, which art in heaven."

II. *Six Petitions*, three of which have a more immediate respect to the glory of God.

1. "Hallowed be thy name.
2. Thy kingdom come.
3. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

And the three remaining, more immediately respect our own personal wants; temporal and spiritual.

1. "Give us this day our daily bread.
2. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.
3. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

The four first of these petitions, are for the obtaining of good, and the two last for the averting of evil.

III. *A Conclusion*, not only acknowledging the perfections of God, but most powerfully pleading them as a reason why our prayers should be heard.

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* Luke xi. 2. † Matt. vi. 9.

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

Every part of prayer is comprehended in this pattern.

Confession is plainly implied in every request, for the requests suppose either our weakness or our sinfulness in the particulars desired.

Petition forms the main substance of this prayer.

Intercession is also involved in the whole; in the three first petitions more directly, and in the remaining petitions by their being in the plural number—give *us*,—forgive *us*, —lead *us*, &c.

Thanksgiving is expressed in the conclusion, and there is in the petitions an implied acknowledgment of all the great perfections of God.

This prayer is too generally used as a vain repetition. It is worthy of remark, that at the very time our Lord gave it, he expressly warned his disciples against vain repetitions.*

Many things may be learned respecting prayer, from this pattern.

1. The filial confidence and reverence with which we ought to approach God.
2. The expediency of method and order in our prayers.
3. The necessity of seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.
4. The lawfulness of then asking for temporal blessings.
5. The importance of the temper in which we pray: an unforgiving temper obtains not God's forgiveness.
6. The duty of praying much for others.
7. The excellence of simplicity of expression.
8. The powerful pleas with which we may urge our petitions.

In this prayer we are not taught to ask in the name of Christ; and the reason may be, that when it was given, Christ's atonement had not actually taken place, nor his intercession as a risen Savior begun. Therefore our Lord says, "hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name—at that day ye shall ask in my name."†

Sect. VII.—*On answers to Prayer.*

Our too general neglect of looking for answers to what we ask, shows how little we are in earnest in our peti-

* Matt. vi 7. † John xvi. 23.

tions. "None ask in earnest," says Trail, "but they wil. try how they speed. There is no surer and plainer mark of trifling in prayer, than when men are careless what they get by prayer."—A husbandman is not content without the narvest; a marksman will observe whether the ball hits the target: a physician watches the effect of the medicine which he gives; one who writes or applies to another for any temporal good eagerly expects the answer; and shall the Christian be careless about the effect of his labor?

Every prayer of the Christian, made in faith according to the will of God, for that which God hath promised, offered up in the name of Jesus Christ, and under the influence of his Spirit, whether for temporal or for spiritual blessings, is, or will be, fully answered. God always answers the general design and intention of his people's prayers, in doing that which, all things considered, is most for his own glory, and their spiritual and eternal welfare. As we never find that Jesus Christ rejected a single supplicant who came to him for mercy; so we believe that no prayer made in his name will be in vain. "The answer of prayer may be approaching, though we discern not its coming. The seed in winter that lies under ground, is taking root in order to a spring and harvest, though it appear not above ground, but seems dead and lost."

The time, or the mode of granting the request may vary indeed from our wishes; but yet the prayer made as above stated is heard, the desire so put up is fulfilled.

Bishop Taylor observes, "As for those irregular donations of good things which wicked persons ask for, and have, they are either no mercies, but instruments of cursing and crime; or else they are designs of grace, intended to convince them of their unworthiness, and so, if they become not instruments of their conversion, they are aggravations of their ruin."

In asking for *spiritual blessings*, for repentance, faith, humility, holiness, love, &c. we are sure of having the particular request, for this is the will of God, even your sanctification. Yet in these things the way of granting the request may, at first sight, seem like a denial.

Remarkable, sometimes, are the ways in which prayers for spiritual blessings are answered. We pray for an increase of faith, patience, resignation, or other Christian graces: and our trials, instead of being removed, seem

greatly aggravated. The clouds grow darker and darker. But the secret supports of the Holy Spirit being afforded, we do not sink under our burden. And in the midst of all these trials, the very things which we asked are given. There is no exercise for faith when all is smooth; no room for patience and resignation when there is no suffering; the very graces which we sought, need difficulties, sorrows, and trials, in order to be manifested, exercised, and granted. Often the very sentence of death is put upon all our hopes, before they are realized. The extremity of suffering is the point of our deliverance. Let the tried Christian, then, attend to Cowper's exhortation:

> Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take!
> The clouds ye so much dread
> Are big with mercy, and shall break
> In blessings on your head.

It is the main desire of every Christian, in a proper state of mind, that the will of God be done; and when he asks for *temporal blessings*, he does it with full purpose of heart, not to have his own wishes accomplished, farther than as they concur with the will of God, which will, he is assured, ever designs his supreme happiness. "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he will give thee the desire of thy heart." If you are really delighting in the Lord, the desire of your heart will be mainly for spiritual things; and for temporal things it will be with the reservation, "thy will be done." This petition whether expressed, or only understood, may often be a prayer that your previous requests for temporal good may not be granted, and thus there may be an opposition in your requests. We lose not by the denial of meaner petitions, when God sets them aside to give greater blessings. This appears to be the meaning of the following passages. "He that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God."* And again, "this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."† No Christian wishes for the answer which the carnal Israelites

* Rom. viii. 27. † 1 John, v. 14, 15.

received. "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul."* If then the Christian be denied the particular request, his real prayers may receive an express answer in his own sanctification, and in the accomplishing of God's holy will; just as a sick man's real desire is accomplished, if he be ultimately made well, even though the medicine or the mode of cure expose him to the things which he dislikes.

But perhaps you ask, How may I know whether my prayers have been answered or not? Sometimes the case is so obvious that it cannot be mistaken—Jehoshaphat prays, and he is delivered from his enemies; Ezekiah prays, and he is delivered from sickness; Jonah prays, and he is delivered from the belly of the whale; the Church prays, and Peter is delivered from Herod. The following, among many others, are examples of answers to particular requests.†

At other times prayers are answered, rather in the increase of grace to bear the afflictions, than in its removal, as in the case of Paul's thorn in the flesh. "There are," says Gee, in his Treatise on the Answer of Prayer, "four ways of God's answering prayers. By giving the things prayed for presently,‡ or by suspending the answer for a time, and giving it afterwards;§ or by withholding that mercy which you ask from you, and giving you a much better mercy in the room of it;‖ or lastly, by giving you patience to bear the loss or want of it."¶

Many examples, in modern times, might be given of answers to prayer, so plain that they cannot be mistaken. Indeed, where is there a Christian who cannot, from his own history, bring instances of this? The prayers of the Martyr Latimer, and their answer, are very observable. There were three principal matters for which he prayed; 1st. That God would give him grace to stand to his doctrine until death. 2d. That God would of his mercy restore his Gospel to England once again—repeating and insisting on the words "once again," as though he had seen God before him, and spoken to him face to face. 3d. That God

* Ps. cvi 15.

† Gen. xxv. 21; 1 Chron. v. 20; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 13; Ezra, viii. 23.

‡ Dan. ix. 23. § Luke, xviii. 7.

‖ Deut. iii. 24, compared with Deut. xxxiv. 4, 5.

¶ 2. Cor. xii. 9

would preserve Elizabeth; with many tears desiring God to make her a comfort to this comfortless realm of England. All these requests were most fully and graciously answered.*

The increase of any Christian grace, poverty of spirit, mourning for sin, meekness, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, quietness of mind, perseverance in prayer, is, to the real Christian, of itself, a most delightful answer to prayer. Whatever other things may have been denied, if these are given, the corresponding promises are secured to you, and the greatest blessings have been granted. If we can say with David, "In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul,"† we may see the prayer answered in the strengthening of the soul, though the particular request be denied.

It is said that our Lord "was heard in that he feared;" but this was not by the removal of his sufferings, but by his having strength suited to his stupendous woe.

The due *use of means* must be attended to, if we wish for answers to our prayers. There is a species of enthusiasm, not uncommon, and to which young or ignorant professors of religion are exposed, that is, to expect the blessing desired in prayer without any effort or exertion on our parts. But in the Bible you may constantly mark how those who earnestly prayed, used the most likely means to effect their desires. Though Jacob passes the night in prayer, he still in the morning takes the best means to pacify his brother Esau. Asa sets the battle in array, as well as cries to God "we rest on thee."‡ Bishop Hall says of Moses, when Israel was about to contend with Amalek, "I do not hear Moses say to his Joshua, Amalek is come up against us, it matters not whether thou go against him, or not; or, if thou go, whether alone or in company; or, if accompanied, whether by many or few, strong or weak; or if strong men, whether they fight or no; I will pray on the hill: but he says, 'choose us out men, and go fight.' Then only can we hope when we have done our best; and though means cannot effect that which we desire, yet God will have us use the likeliest means on our part to effect it. Prayer, without the use of means, is a mockery of God."

* See Fox's Life of Latimer. † Ps. cxxxviii. 3.
‡ Chron. xiv. 10, 11.

"The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing."* Means being required, both in God's word and by the course of his providence, neglect of them is not faith, but unbelief. The patient who trusts his physician's skill, will carefully follow his directions. Believing prayer does not render exertion unnecessary, but makes it effectual; giving a divine power and blessing to that which was before a merely weak and human effort. And the right way is neither to use unlawful means, nor lawful ones irregularly, nor to trust either in them, or in our prayers; but humbly and diligently to go on in the path of duty, using those means which seem right and profitable, and trusting only in God our Savior to bring the thing to pass, and that in his own way. His wisdom, power, and love, are infinite. His ways are often dark and mysterious to weak and fallible man; but it will ever be found in the end, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."†

But supposing after having done all, and waited long, our prayers are still denied, what are we then to conclude?

The *denial* of prayer is always in mercy to the children of God. It was in kindness to David that his child was taken away. He earnestly prayed for the life of one who would have been a living monument of his shame. He eagerly longed for the preservation of Absalom: but in mercy that rebellious son, who might have ruined him, was cut off. And how frequently is the denial spiritually useful!

Goodwin observes, "often the very denial breaks the hard heart, and brings a man nearer to God, and puts him on searching into his ways, and estate, and to see what should be amiss in his prayer; which alone is a great mercy, and better than the thing; seeing that by the loss of that one thing, he learns to pray better, and so to obtain a hundred better things afterwards."

We lose many proofs of God's faithfulness and grace, his tenderness and compassion, by not marking the answers to our prayers in these and in other respects.

Gee thus enumerates the ends for which God may for a season hide himself from the prayers of his people.

"In reference to *themselves*—to increase their assiduity and ardency in prayer—to fit them for the mercy prayed for

* Prov. xiii. 4. † Ps. ii. 12.

—to exercise and try their faith, patience, love, sincerity, of sanctification, and obedience—to manifest himself to them more fully, either in or after the delay—to make the benefit prayed for more precious and welcome, and useful when it comes—to remove the impediments of their receiving or enjoying the mercy sought for—and to raise up their thoughts, their faith, hope, love and longings, to the second appearing of Christ. In reference to *others*—to make up and bring in the number of those for whom the mercy is proposed—to complete the account of the church's sufferers and sufferings—to give others an example of patient and confident waiting upon God—and for the greater dismay and confusion of the adversary."

When your *prayers* are *not answered*, let it lead you to self-examination. Perhaps the prayer may have been answered in a way you have not thought of. Perhaps you were desiring something that would only foster ambition or pride, or were merely considering ease or comfort, without regard to spiritual edification. Or look for the cause of it, in your neglect of Christ's intercession, or your ingratitude for former answers: question your own faith, the fervency of your desires, the purity of your end, the propriety of the manner in which you have offered up your petitions:* yes, any thing rather than God's faithfulness: "Let God be true, and every man a liar." Again. God will not be inquired of by those who have an idol in their hearts.† If you are living in any habitual sin, you cannot expect that your prayers should be heard.

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* There are two duties connected with the efficacy of prayer, that are, it is to be feared, too little practised or insisted on—Alms and Fasting. The *alms* of Cornelius ascended with his prayers to God; "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." Acts, x. 4. See also Prov. xxi. 13.

Parr observes, "Religious Fasting is also a notable help to prayer, and is often commended to us in the word of God. It is a voluntary abstaining from dinner or supper, or both, as our bodies will bear, and from all delicacies, for one day, or more, undertaken to make us more fit for prayer and repentance. The ends in our fasting are, 1st. A fitting ourselves to prayer, that we may be the more lively and earnest; and 2dly. That it may be a help and testimony of our sorrow for sin, and of our humiliation before God."—Only herein ever take heed to avoid superstition, (Rom. xiv. 17.) and any opinion of merit, (1 Cor. viii. 8.) and to fast from sin. Isa. lviii. 5, 6; Jer. 12.

† Isa. lix. 2; Ezek. xiv. 3.

When your *prayers* are *answered*, let it assure you of God's faithfulness and love; let it encourage you to renew your prayers, to abound therein, to seek God more constantly, to depend more simply on his strength, to lay yourself out more entirely for him, and never to fear undertaking any thing in his cause. Let it excite you to abound in thanksgiving and praise.*

May what has been stated encourage you not only to hope, but patiently to wait for, and attentively observe God's answers to prayer. Keep from such sins as would provoke him to deny your requests, and go on striving and praying, asking, seeking, and knocking, till you are at length safely landed on the heavenly shore: you will then find every prayer fully answered, every wish accomplished, and your souls "filled with all the fullness of God."

SECT. VIII.—*The Frequency of Private Prayer.*

The Scriptures do not give express directions how often we ought to pray, farther than by general intimations and the examples of others. We ought always to be in the spirit of prayer. But we are speaking now of stated seasons for retired prayer: and of this we say, that at the least you ought to pray twice every day. David says, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High: to show forth thy loving kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night."† "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up."‡ And again, "let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice."§ Morning and evening devotions, then, every day, should never be omitted; and, speaking generally, unless you are prevented by circumstances out of your control, they cannot be neglected without much damage to your soul. Prayer has been compared to a key, that in the morning opens the treasury of God's mercies; and in the evening shuts us up under his protection and safeguard. It has ever been found, that as we have sought God in spirit and in truth in the morning, so the rest of the day has prospered.

The habit of early rising is of great importance to the

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* Ps. lxvi. 13, 20.
† Ps. xcii. 1, 2.
‡ Ps. v. 3.
§ Ps. cxli. 2.

due discharge of morning prayer. O how many precious hours do indolent Christians lose; while those who are more self-denying and diligent, are gaining the favor of God and enjoying communion with him!*

Our first waking thoughts should be directed towards God; copying David's example, who says, "When I awake I am still with thee."† I would advise you to be longest in your morning devotions, when your spirits are lively and vigorous, and undisturbed by the events of the day; in the evening, when you are tired and spent with its labors, be shorter, and endeavor to attend to this duty sometime before you retire to rest. If your evening devotions are deferred till every thing else is done, there is great danger of their being often imperfectly performed, if not altogether omitted.

The Rev. Mr. Simeon remarks, "It is too generally found, that many, instead of transacting their business with God while their faculties are alive, stay till exhausted nature is become incapable of any energetic exertion, and then hurry over some form of prayer, as a school-boy does his task, without feeling one word they utter. Even this is too favorable a representation of the prayers of some others,

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* Col. Gardiner set an admirable example. "He used constantly to rise at four in the morning, and to spend his time till six, in secret exercise of devotion, reading, meditation, and prayer; in which last he contracted such a fervency of spirit, as I believe few men living ever obtained. This certainly tended very much to strengthen that firm faith in God, and reverent animating sense of his presence, for which he was so eminently remarkable, and which carried him through the trials and services of life with such steadiness and such activity; for he indeed endured and acted as always 'seeing him who is invisible.' If at any time he was obliged to go out before six in the morning, he rose proportionably sooner; so that when a journey or a march has required him to be on horseback by four, he would be at his devotions at farthest by two. He likewise secured time for retirement in an evening; and that he might have it more at command, and be the more fit to use it properly, as well as the better able to rise early the next morning, he generally went to bed about ten: and during the time I was acquainted with him, he seldom ate any supper, but a mouthful of bread, with one glass of wine. In consequence of this, as well as of his admirably good constitution and the long habit he had formed, he required less sleep than most persons I have known: and I doubt not but his uncommon progress in piety was in a great measure owing to these resolute habits of self-denial."—See Doddridge's Life of Col Gardiner.

† Ps. cxxxix. 18.

who stay till they have 'ien down upon their bed, and then fall asleep in the midst of their devotions. As for praying in the morning, they have no time for that; concerns of the past or present day have preoccupied their minds; and if they offer two or three cold petitions while they are dressing, or before they leave their room, they think this quite sufficient."

Regular devotional exercises, twice every day, in secret, are insisted on as a plain duty. More than this is strongly recommended. Christians in general would find, what many do find in their own practice, a great advantage in obtaining a few leisure moments for retired and stated prayer in the middle of the day. The word of God gives us encouraging examples of those who have done so. "Evening, morning, and at noon-day, will I pray, and cry aloud, and he shall hear my voice."* Daniel, in time of great danger, his windows being opened in his chamber, "kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God as he aforetime did."† Here was the secret spring of the eminency of these holy men. They were much in prayer. Besides, men's thoughts and affections will necessarily be most vigorous and lively about those things in which they are incessantly employed, and they are able to do that best which they do most frequently. This is very evident in the common affairs of life. Indeed, we see this to be the case, as in prayer itself our thoughts so continually run out after our daily and more constant occupations.

Many objections are ever ready to start up in the natural heart, when we are called on to form a determined resolution to attend to any holy duty. But let us say as one said, "If the house were about to fall down, I must pray;" meaning that the salvation of his immortal soul was a matter of such infinitely superior magnitude to every earthly concern, that whatever were the consequence, he must attend to that.

Respecting the time to be allotted to prayer, no general rule can be given. Many have the command of their whole time, and from them more is reasonably expected. Surely an hour or two in twenty-four is not too much for them. A real love to God, and a due sense of the value of his favor,

* Ps. lv. 17. † Dan. vi. 10.

will make a cheerful and liberal giver. Others, as servants, who have hardly any time that they can call their own, are yet bound to redeem some for God. Dr. Doddridge remarks, "that there are few who, with proper care, might not have a half or three quarters of an hour at command for reading the Scriptures and prayer, morning and evening." Let there be a willing mind, and a way will be found.

"Let those," says Bishop Horne, "who retire in the middle of the day to adorn their persons, take the opportunity of putting on the ornaments of grace, and renewing the spirit of their minds."

In many cases and situations it will be impossible to retire to your private chamber for a mid-day prayer; but in a walk, in your house, or in your business, your heart may statedly retire at a particular season for a few leisure moments from the world, and hold communion with its God. Only try.

Some of the last words which an African youth (very dear to the writer, and now, he doubts not, in heaven) told one of those about him, were, "I used to pray three times every day, and I now find that it was good—do you mind to do the same."*

The importance of this regular and frequent devotion will be evident from the consideration of the great concerns which we then have to transact with God. "I have," says Baxter, "more and greater business to do with God in one day, than with all the world in all my life. My business with God is so great, that, if I had not a Mediator to encourage and assist me to do my work, and procure my acceptance, the thoughts of it would overwhelm my soul. Therefore let man stand by: I have to do with the great and eternal God, and with him I am to transact in this little time the business of my endless life. I am to seek of God, through Christ, the pardon of all my great and grievous sins: and if I speed not, woe unto me that ever I was born! I have some hopes of pardon, but intermixed with many perplexing fears. I have evidences of grace, but they are exceedingly blotted: I want assurances that God is my reconciled Father, and that he will receive me to himself when the world forsakes me. I have many languishing graces to be strengthened; and, alas! what rooted, inveterate, vexatious corrup-

* See Memoir of Simeon Wilhelm.

tions to be cured! Can I look into my heart, into such an unbelieving and earthly heart, into such a proud and peevish heart, into such a perplexing and trembling heart, and not discern how great my business is with God? Can I survey my sins, feel my wants, and sink under my weaknesses? Can I look forward, and see how near my time is to an end? Can I think of the malice and diligence of Satan; the number, power, and policy of my enemies; the many dangerous snares and temptations that are around me, and my own ignorance, and weakness, and unwatchfulness, and not know that my greatest business is with God?"* Surely such views should lead us to frequent prayer.

Sect. IX.—*The Reward of Private Prayer.*

"Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." While this holds out to us the certain reward of secret devotion, it also discovers to us a delightful view of the glory and perfections of God. Heathen nations fancy that the God of heaven and earth is too far off, or too great, to attend to the petitions of men—that he is too determined, and too careless, or too powerful to be moved by them, and that therefore they must pray to inferior Deities. But in what a much sublimer light do the Christian Scriptures lead us to think of God! He is everywhere present—"in Him we live, move, and have our being:" He "performeth all things for us;" He "seeth in secret." Ogden says on this subject, "How magnificent is this idea of God's government! That he inspects the whole and every part of the universe every moment, and orders it according to the counsels of his infinite wisdom and goodness by his Almighty will! whose thought is power, and his acts ten thousand times quicker than the light; unconfused in a multiplicity exceeding number, and unwearied through eternity."

Christian! when you enter your closet for private prayer, you are going into the presence chamber of this great King of kings; you are about to hold intercourse with him in the character of a tender father. He is indeed every where present, but he manifests his presence to those that

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* See Baxter's Converse with God.

seek him. He bestows on them his grace and blessing. O the dignity and glory of the Christian! O the vanity of the world! O the astonishing blindness and perverseness of man, who can think slightly of his richest privilege, and his highest honor! The advantages of prayer, generally, have already been pointed out; but consider farther —Intercourse with God in secret prayer, *has a transforming efficacy.* When Moses had been with God in the mount, the skin of his face shone. Something of that glory which had been then manifested to him remained with him. And thus the Christian often comes from his closet, with some of the beams of heavenly light and glory, shining as it were in his countenance. Coming into the world is sometimes to him like coming back into a lower sphere, into a new society. He has been holding converse with the unseen world, and he returns invigorated and refreshed for every duty. "Our graces will languish and die, our spirits grow heavy and dull, unless we are refreshed and revived by constant intercourse with the great paternal Spirit." Grove says, "The effects of Christian retirement will appear in the sweet composure of the passions, the evenness and affability of the behavior, the charitableness of the temper, and the purity and tranquillity of the life." The retired violet, which hides itself in the shade, gives one of the sweetest scents; and the lowly Christian, who is constant in secret prayer, diffuses a holy feeling, a heavenly atmosphere around him.

This blessed employment in secret *raises the Christian above anxiety about temporal things.* A holy intercourse with his Maker gives him a fixedness and serenity which nothing else can bestow, and hardly any thing can discompose. It prepares him for all events, and fills him with a noble contempt for all the sinful pleasures and pursuits of a world lying in wickedness. It is like a sure anchor, safely fixed in solid ground, which, though unseen above, keeps the vessel stedfast and secure amid the tumultuous waves and the stormy tempest.

The devout Christian, praying in secret, *makes rapid advances in the divine life.* "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." Sins with which the indolent and careless Christian is contending to his life's end,

soon yield to continued fervent prayer. Prayer gains for us that strength which enables us to surmount every difficulty, and removes every obstacle in our way to Sion. Are our affections toward God and Christ becoming cold? prayer is as a fire to which we must approach, and doing so, we shall perceive a gentle warmth insensibly overspread us, and our benumbed powers will acquire fresh energy and vigor.

It was the daily practice of the eminent physician Boerhaave, through his whole life, as soon as he rose in the morning, which was generally very early, to retire for an hour to private prayer, and meditation on some part of the Scriptures. He often told his friends, when they asked him how it was possible for him to go through so much fatigue with such patience and quietness, that it was this which gave him spirit and vigor in the business of the day. This he therefore recommended as the best rule which he could give.

Private prayer is *an engine of greater power than all human means put together.** The greatest of earthly monarchs, neglecting prayer, has not that power to glorify God, benefit man, and secure his own happiness, which the humble and praying Christian has. The prayer of a poor, destitute, and afflicted Christian, in the name of Christ, may turn the hearts of kings and princes, save his country, raise up pious ministers, secure a blessing to their labors, send the Gospel to the heathen, and advance the kingdom of Christ in the world. Prayer has an advantage above alms, and every other good work, which can only benefit a few, while faithful prayer can help all. It is also a resource, of which man cannot deprive you; he may despoil, blind, and maim, imprison, or otherwise injure you; but he cannot keep you from prayer. Observe the power of prayer in the example of Elijah. He was "a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit."

* "Admirable is the power of prayer. It calms the surges of a troubled spirit—shuts lions' mouths—opens prison doors—beats the fiercest enemies—nay, arrests the impending judgments of God." Reading's Guide to the Holy City.

It makes us fruitful in every good work.—"I reckon it," says Bennett, "matter of common experience among good men, that they find themselves more or less disposed, and fit for their respective duties and service, according as their diligence, constancy, and seriousness in secret prayer is more or less." The root that produces the beautiful and flourishing tree, with all its spreading branches, verdant leaves, and refreshing fruit, that which gains for it sap, life, vigor, and fruitfulness is all unseen; and the farther and the deeper the roots spread beneath, the more the tree expands above. Christians, if you wish to prosper, if you long to bring forth all the fruit of the Spirit, strike your roots deep and wide in private prayer. That faith and support, that strength and grace, which you seek of God in secret, that it may be exercised in the hour of need, God will in that hour give it you before men.

Mr. Scott says, "Depend upon it, every thing will prosper in the event, in a very near proportion to our earnestness and perseverance in prayer: but negligence here will be followed by a declension perhaps almost unperceived in all other respects, and will make way for temptations, falls, corrections, darkness, and inward distresses: if like Jacob we wrestle with God, and prevail, we shall eventually prevail in all our other conflicts."

It *will be rewarded openly.*—Our Lord does not in these words promise the very thing which you request; but your Father will reward you; he will give you a free, a full return, a gracious retribution, evidently, though not perhaps identically. How manifestly before all men Hannah was rewarded, when the name of her son Samuel (meaning "asked of God") told all Israel, and tells the Church in every age, that God hears and answers prayer! How openly were Jacob's secret prayers answered, when Esau publicly received him so graciously! Our heavenly Father will also, before men and angels, hereafter reward thy secret devotion. Now it is unknown to man, but it will all be known, and known by the greatness of its reward. Every tear of godly sorrow, shed in secret, will then be a brilliant gem in the crown of glory surrounding the brow of the Christian. The Christian's reward comes from a Father of infinite power, riches, wisdom, and love; and therefore cannot be a small reward, or an unsatisfying portion.

May every reader then be encouraged to begin, or more

constantly to practise, and persevere in the sacred duty. However dull our spirits, however wearied our body, however wandering our minds, let us never wholly omit this duty, never put it off with a vain excuse to another season. To do so is Satan's temptation. It is better to attempt to pray in the best way you can, than not to pray at all. And you will sometimes find the Lord assist you with the supply of his Spirit, enliven your soul, fix your mind, and draw and raise your heart to himself.

One of Melancthon's correspondents gives this account of Luther's private devotions, in one of the most trying and critical times in the course of the Reformation. "I cannot enough describe the cheerfulness, constancy, faith, and hope of this man, in these trying and vexatious times. He constantly feeds these good affections by a very diligent study of the word of God. Then, not a day passes in which he does not employ in prayer, three, at least, of his very best hours. Once I happened to hear him at prayer. Gracious Lord! what spirit, and what faith there is in his expressions! He petitions God with as much reverence as if he was actually in the divine presence, and yet with as firm a hope and confidence as he would address a father or a friend. 'I know,' said he, 'thou art our Father, and our God, therefore, I am sure that thou wilt bring to naught the persecutors of thy children. For shouldst thou fail to do this, thine own cause, being connected with ours, would be endangered. It is entirely thine own concern: we, by thy providence, have been compelled to take a part. Thou, therefore, wilt be our defence.' While I was listening to Luther praying in this manner at a distance, my soul seemed on fire within me, to hear the man address God so like a friend, and yet with so much gravity and reverence; and also to hear him, in the course of his prayer, insisting on the promises contained in the Psalms, as if he were sure his petitions would be granted." (See Milner's Hist. of the Church of Christ, vol. 5.) No wonder that Luther was such a blessing to the world. All men of great usefulness to the Church have much abounded in prayer.

But why speak we of others? let us notice only the extraordinary spirit of devotion which adorned *our blessed Savior*. This part of his character has been well described: when twelve years of age, he was engaged in the Temple with the Doctors, in his "Father's business."

When he entered on his public ministry, he committed himself in solemn prayer to God. Before he chose his twelve Apostles, as well as at his transfiguration, he spent a considerable time in devotion. During his ministry, he resorted to the synagogue on the sabbath. He devoutly referred every act of his life and ministry, his mission, his doctrine, his miracles, his sufferings, his resurrection, to the will and appointment of his Father. He encouraged a spirit of prayer in his disciples, by commanding them to pray, and by supplying them with a model of prayer. He sanctioned these encouragements to prayer by his own example; and by "going out into a desert to pray;" by rising up early, and by "continuing all night in prayer to God:" by pouring out earnest and frequent addresses to his heavenly Father, as new exigencies arose; by his solemn intercessory supplication, previous to his last sufferings; by his "strong crying and tears" during his agony; and by commending his soul to his Father as he expired on the cross."*

If the Savior of the world thus prayed, and was heard, and carried through his stupendous work, can we have a stronger motive to abound in prayer?

CHAPTER VI.

ON PUBLIC WORSHIP.

Many are the advantages, and great is the necessity of private prayer; but it will not be difficult to show, that public worship is also a duty of plain and vast importance.

We will consider, first, the duty and advantage of public worship; and then the mode of duly performing the duty.

The assembling of ourselves together is required in the Scriptures of all Christians. The Apostle exhorts us to it as a great means of strengthening our love to God and man; "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is."† The invitation runs, "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel be-

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* See Daniel Wilson's Sermons. † Heb. x. 24, 25.

fore the Lord our Maker."* "Come into his courts; O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."† The direction is, "Praying always, with all prayer."‡ It is plainly pointed out as a means to avert God's judgments; "call a solemn assembly, gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders. Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people."§ These things, and the practice of all holy persons, from the time when "men began to call on the name of the Lord,"‖ with the example of our Lord and his disciples, give us sufficient scriptural authority for the practice of public worship. Nor should we forget the appointment of a particular day for the solemn worship of God, and of a particular place for the Jewish nation, the various regulations, and directions respecting their public worship; all which things show that it is a divine ordinance pleasing and acceptable to God.

Public worship is *a suitable and proper expression of homage to our Creator.* "In him we live, and move, and have our being;" and it is just and right that we should publicly and unitedly "give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name." We all depend on him, and it is right that we should join in acknowledging this, and praying to him. We have in common sinned against him, and right it is that we should in common confess our sins before him. We need the same supplies, we have received the same mercies, and may therefore unite in the same prayers and praises. Reasonable and immortal creatures are engaged in an object worthy of their nature and character, when they unite together to "exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool."¶ The angels and spirits of just men made perfect, unite in surrounding the throne of glory with hymns and praises. We are to do his will "on earth as it is done in heaven." If we, then, expect to join the society above, we should obtain a meetness on earth for their blissful employment.

It is also *a public testimony and profession of our religion.* We hereby show "whose we are, and whom we serve." The religion of a nation is known by its worship. "All people walk every one in the name of his God, and

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* Ps. xcv. 6. † Ps. xcvi. 8, 9. ‡ Eph. vi. 18.
§ Joel ii. 15, 17. ‖ Gen. iv 26. ¶ Ps. xcix. 5.

we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever."* If heathen nations assemble to worship idols; if Mahometans meet to worship an unknown God, and honor Mahomet: let Christians meet to worship the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of the spirits of all flesh;" and thus give a public avowal of their being the disciples of Jesus Christ, the only Lord and Savior. By withdrawing from the public assembly of his people, you do in effect own yourself not to belong to those who love and fear God, and shall dwell with him for ever. Persons of the greatest piety have ever been most remarkable for their attachment to public worship. Look with this view at the Psalms of David. See Psalms xlii. xliii. lxxxiv.

Public worship is *attended with some peculiar advantages.* The constant return of the weekly sabbath, and its worship, keep alive those impressions of religion which the cares, and business, and distractions of this world would wear away. Our Savior makes a special promise applicable to it, saying, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."† "The Lord is in his holy temple. He loveth the gates of Sion more than all the dwellings of Jacob," peculiarly there manifesting to his people his presence, in which is "fullness of joy." He declares, "I will make them joyful in my house of prayer."‡ Worldly men find it natural and easy to meet in a mart or exchange for worldly advantages, and the religious man finds it thus easy to go to the house of God for spiritual advantages. We thus turn the sympathy of nature, common to us all, to its best account. It has a tendency to unite men together in mutual love. We are quickened, solemnized, and enlivened by the devotion of a well-ordered congregation. "I will praise the Lord with my whole heart," says David, "in the congregation of the faithful." Earth affords not a more impressive, affecting, and solemn sight, than that of a whole congregation uniting in acts of prayer and praise to the great Lord of all. In such a scene, also, the Christian peculiarly enjoys the privilege of the communion of saints.

The reading and preaching of the Holy Scriptures being joined with public worship, the young, the poor, the ignorant, and uninstructed, have, by this means, a most import-

* Micah, iv. 5. † Matt. xviii. 19, 20. ‡ Isa. lvi. 7.

ant opportunity of religious instruction. The beneficial effects of this, when generally kept up through a whole nation, cannot easily be estimated.

But public worship *is a privilege as well as a duty*—To the Christian it is not a burdensome task, but a delightful employment, under the influences of the Holy Spirit, to join his fellow Christians in prayer and praise. Observe how David speaks—"One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."* "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts; my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."† Hence the sabbath is to the Christian a happy day. He looks forward to it with pleasure. He regrets its departure. He would not, on any account, willingly deprive himself of its privileges, or lose its worship.

The observance of the *Sabbath* is so intimately connected with public worship, that it may be useful to show the obligation to keep holy the Lord's day.

The sabbath was sanctified and set apart for God from the beginning.‡ "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made."§ Hence we may infer not only the advantage, but the absolute necessity, as the world now is, if we would pay any suitable regard to religion, or to the salvation of our immortal souls, of time set apart for the immediate service of God.

The command to "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," though given to the Jewish church with many cir-

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* Ps. xxvii. 4. † Ps. lxxxiv. 1, 2.

‡ It has, indeed, been objected, that there is no subsequent mention of the observance of the sabbath by the patriarchs; but not to say that there are intimations of a division of time into weeks, (Gen. viii. 10, 12; xxix. 27; 1, 10,) it might, for the same reason, have been thought, that the Jews did not observe the sabbath from Moses to David, since in the history of all that time there is no mention of that day. Those who object to the institution of the sabbath, from the beginning, admit that "if the divine command was actually delivered at the creation, it was addressed no doubt to the whole human species alike, and continues, unless repealed by some subsequent revelation, binding on all who come to the knowledge of it."

§ Gen. ii. 3.

cumstances of peculiar strictness, occurs among the mora laws in the Ten Commandments. Mr. Cecil thus explains its true character—"The Jewish Sabbath was partly of political institution, and partly of moral obligation; so far as it was a political appointment, designed to preserve the Jews from other nations, it is abrogated; so far as it was of moral obligation, it remains in force. Christ came not to abolish the Sabbath, but to explain and enforce it, as he did the rest of the law. Its observance was nowhere positively enjoined by him, because Christianity was to be practicable, and was to go into all nations, and it goes thither stripped of its precise and various circumstances. 'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day,' seems to be the soul of the Christian Sabbath." The circumstance of the continuance of the Jewish Economy, while our Lord and his Apostles lived, sufficiently accounts for there being no positive precept in the New Testament respecting the observance of the first day of the week, our Sunday. Yet the practice of the primitive church,* their freedom from the Jewish Sabbath,† and the actual appointment in our country of the first day, plainly require our observing Sunday, "the Lord's day,"‡ being the first, instead of Saturday, the seventh day of the week.

While our Savior, "who is Lord even of the Sabbath day," has rectified the superstitious abuse of the Institution, and allows us to perform works of necessity and charity,§ yet it is clear that he would never have reformed the abuse of this fourth Commandment, had the Sabbath been an ordinance which was to die in a little time. Hence it is our plain duty, as far as it is possible, to devote the first day of the week wholly to the service of God. "We are going," says Mr. Cecil, "to spend a sabbath in eternity. The Christian will acquire as much of the sabbath spirit as he can. And in proportion to a man's real piety, in every age of the church, he will be found to have been a diligent observer of the Sabbath day."

Alas! how perpetually is this holy day profaned in our Christian land! what multitudes transact their usual business! how many shops in large towns are more or less open! how many thousands of Sunday newspapers are

* Acts, xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. Rev. i. 10

† Col. ii. 16.

§ Matt. xii. 1, 12.

published, sold, and read! what needless travelling, visiting, writing letters, settling of accounts, &c.

But how much more holy and more happy is the Christian's employment of this day! It is to him a delight and a joy. He gives it wholly to its varied, but sacred duties. He reads the Scriptures, and other devotional books, examines his heart, thinks on his ways, and meditates on spiritual and eternal things. He attends public worsnip, and instructs his family, or visits the poor and afflicted. He seeks to have his heart with God all the day long, and thus passing his Sabbaths here below, he becomes better prepared for an eternal sabbath above.

But to return to the duty of public worship.

My readers may be of two classes:—either more or less neglecting public worship, or constantly attending it. Are you *living in the neglect of public worship?* To such it may be said, though it be no certain mark of the truth of a man's religious profession that he comes to public worship, yet his habitual or frequent absence, when he has it in his power to come, is a plain mark that a man has no real religion. He is unlike his Savior, and unlike the disciples of that Savior: and thus continuing to despise the earthly house of his God, he will fail of an entrance into his eternal mansions. It was foretold, that in the days of the Messiah, his followers should generally and unitedly assemble together, to engage themselves in his service. "Many people shall say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths."* May you, then, be excited by the considerations which I have stated, to begin a constant, regular, and habitual attendance at the house of God; and thus not only gain inestimable benefits to yourself, but also by your example and your influence bring others thither. But perhaps you may imagine that you have sufficient reasons to induce you to stay at home.

It is not an uncommon objection made to a due attendance on the duty of public worship, *I can pray better at home—I can learn more at home by reading good books* The preceding observations have already furnished a sufficient answer to this objection. Those who make it not un-

* Isa. ii 3

frequently totally neglect also religious duties at home. Public worship is a means of grace of divine appointment, and therefore must not be neglected. Though you may not seem to derive that profit and edification which you think you gain from reading a religious book, you do in reality lose all the peculiar benefits of public worship yourself, and do all that the power of example can effect, to keep others from its advantages. Besides, did you really know more than your teachers, you might still learn, from the example of our Savior, in whom were and "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," to attend public worship. We read of him "as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day."*

Others think that it is *unnecessary to go constantly.* The same reasons which require you to go at all, call on you also to be constant in going. It is the regular return of the duty which makes it so valuable in the Christian life. You do not think it unnecessary to partake constantly and regularly of food for your body; nor is it less necessary to be regular in seeking food for your soul. A leaky vessel in the ocean, continually letting in the waters, needs continual pumping and bailing to keep it free; and thus the corrupt heart of man calls for a constant use of every means to keep it free from sin. There is a great advantage in a constant attendance. "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God; they shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing."† It would appear from Heb. x. 25, 27, that remissness respecting "the assembling of ourselves together," was the first step to apostasy. Will not the constancy of the early Christians in frequenting their assemblies for worship in great difficulties, and often at the risk of their lives, condemn you who refuse to attend, though the house of God is open and you have full liberty to go thither?

Some refuse to go because they have personal *prejudice against the minister.* There may be, indeed, trying cases of unfaithful teachers, and there is a sad woe pronounced on those "by whom the offence cometh;" but surely this objection ought not to induce you altogether to neglect attendance on public worship. We should not disregard

* Luke iv. 16. † Ps. xcii. 13, 14.

that instruction even of an ungodly minister, which is scriptural. "The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat; all, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do ye not after their works, for they say and do not." But let me ask, have you practised fervent, persevering, and united prayer for your minister? Try this; and perhaps your prejudices may be removed, or his character changed. Christians often forget, in their desire of having a faithful minister, who shall preach to them the pure doctrines of Christ, that it is as easy for God to enlighten their present minister "with the true knowledge and understanding of his word," to enable their present pastor, "both by his preaching and living to set it forth, and show it accordingly," as it is to send them such an one as they desire. Let me strongly and urgently recommend you to try the plan of fervent and persevering prayer for your minister.

Many of my readers, however, *attend public worship constantly.** To them, on this point, I need only say, "be not weary of well doing." You have, however, perhaps, relatives, friends, dependants, or connexions, whom you greatly love, who never come at all. May what has been said incline you to use every proper means in your power to bring them. You have over them, probably, the influence of authority, friendship, or affection; use this talent of influence in your Savior's service; and, by the constraining power of love, compel them to come in to his house. And while you thus exert yourself in their behalf, O seek, on every account, duly to perform that great duty in which you yourself are engaged. Seek, when you "come into his courts, to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

We proceed to consider *how we may duly worship God in his house.* We may worship God "in the beauty of holiness." We do this, when, approaching him in the name of Jesus Christ, and through the assistance of his Spirit, all our faculties are fixed and engaged in this work;

* It is to be regretted, that the appointment of the Church of England for public worship twice a week as well as on Sundays, through the decay of Christian piety, is in a great measure nugatory. It is, however, in some measure supplied by the week-day Evening Lectures which are more convenient to our present habits, and which Christians in most large towns have now an opportunity of attending.

our expressions accompanied by suitable affections, by holy longings and thirstings of soul after God; in short, when the whole man is dedicated to the solemn act of worshipping God.

There is no beauty of holiness, without a reference to the mediation of Jesus Christ. God cannot, but through Him, look on sinners with acceptance. But Jesus Christ, like the High Priest of Israel, bears "the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel hallow in all their holy gifts." He has *holiness to the Lord* "upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord."* Every prayer must be offered up in his name.†

It may be useful to point out some things inconsistent with this due worship of God.

An unprepared mind, thoughtless of the work till about to be engaged in it, will very generally lead to careless worship.

Coming from *wrong motives* will lead to the same thing. Some come merely from form or custom, or to be seen of men; without any expectation of finding the presence of God, or any desire to obtain his grace. Others come merely as a self-righteous act, fancying public worship to be a species of meritorious obedience, that will entitle them to heaven.

Carelessness and irreverence mark the worship of some. They come in late, in the middle of prayers, when they have it in their power to come in good time. Not to mention the bad effect of this as an example, only consider for a moment the disturbance which it occasions in the devotions of others. It has been justly observed, "a well-tutored mind will revolt at the thought of unnecessarily disturbing others in the most solemn of all employments. If you look at the various classes of Christians, you will find, with scarcely an exception, that those who have been the greatest honor to religion, and added most to the edification of their brethren, attended on God's worship steadily

* Exodus xxviii. 38.

† John xiv. 13. 14. Here I cannot but remark, that the conclusion of the various Collects in the Liturgy gives the members of our church a frequent and continual opportunity of having respect to the intercession of the Savior, and offering up every petition in his name. Many excellent persons have found the advantage and comfort of this.

and in proper time. There is often a striking analogy between people's manner in such things, and their general character."*

Others are careless during worship. They sit at the proper time for kneeling or standing, though no bodily infirmities may require it.† They look about them, and are attracted by any thing that may pass in the congregation. But if servants were to come before any master on earth to ask for a favor in the same careless disrespectful way, what could they expect, but a denial of their request, and a rebuke for their contempt of his person and presence? Our minds and faculties ought to be absorbed in the great act of worshipping Jehovah, the God of the spirits of all flesh; but, alas! all have more or less reason to bewail sad wanderings and distractions of spirit.

These things are inconsistent with worshipping God as we ought. Our Lord says, "that his true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

As some of the directions which follow will have a particular reference to those who join in the forms of our church, it may be expedient to point out some of *the advantages of a Liturgy.*‡ Great allowance must indeed be made for the power of custom and education, which have such an influence upon our minds, as much to affect

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* See Kinghorn on Public Worship. Mr. Scott remarks, "It is certainly very dishonorable to God whom we worship, and very irreverent, and a very bad example to others, for persons to be frequently, or without sufficient reason, too late at a place of worship; to the interruption of others, and often (I speak feelingly) of him who leads the worship.—There is nothing that with me tends so much to make our public worship formal, as the continual interruption which arises from persons coming in after the service is begun." See the volume of his letters.

† The propriety of kneeling in public worship is manifested by various Scripture examples. 2. Chron. vi. 12, 13; Ezra ix. 5; Dan. vi 10; Paul, Acts xxi. 5; Eph. iii. 14. Observe the invitation of the Psalmist, (Ps. xcv. 6.) "O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker"—and the example of our Lord, who "kneeled down and prayed" (Luke xxii. 41.) and also of St. Paul, (see Acts xx. 36,) where it is said that he "kneeled down and prayed with them all."

‡ We are here speaking of forms of prayer, not for private or family, but for public worship. The word Liturgy is derived from a Greek word, signifying *public work*- he who labors not in his prayers, does not pray aright.

our devotional feelings. One who has been accustomed to join a congregation in worshipping without forms, has perhaps a great prejudice against them, and may find it difficult with a form to worship God in spirit and in truth. But another having found the presence of God in the simple and scriptural devotion of our Liturgy, will find extempore prayer, in public worship, an impediment to his devotions.

While it is admitted that there is danger of mere formality, weariness, and inattentiveness, both to the minister and people, in the use of forms of prayer; yet it appears to the writer, that this danger is not confined to them; it is, alas! the grand difficulty of all desiring true prayer, however they may worship. It also appears to him, that our Liturgy has advantages which we cannot otherwise so completely and effectually receive; independent of the fact, that pious clergymen continually find the advantage of having an exposition of divine truth of acknowledged excellence to refer to as a standard.

Our Lord says, "If any two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them." Now, though there is in the mind of man, that quickness of apprehension and consent, which may obtain the benefit of this promise in extempore prayer, yet the agreement of desire spoken of may be more specially and fully attained in the use of a form, which all the Christians who meet together have long known and approved. Is there not also a danger in extempore prayer, lest the mind of the hearer, being held in continual expectation, should be detained from its proper business by the very novelty with which it is gratified?

Where the worship of those who join in our Liturgy is sincere, may we not say, that this is more manifestly "praying in the Holy Ghost?" because, while the heart is engaged, and the desires expressed are scriptural, the mere natural affections cannot have been raised by novelty of expression or sentiment. So far, therefore, from there being less, there is, to a spiritual worshipper, greater evidence in the use of forms of obtaining and enjoying communion with God.

It is sometimes objected, that forms stint and limit the Spirit; but let it never be forgotten, that the great thing wanted in prayer is not the multitude and variety of ex-

pressions, but an engaged heart and warm affections. "They who use forms pray by the Spirit when their petitions are accompanied with fervent affections stirred in them by the Holy Ghost. They who are most fluent in conceived prayer, may pray only from the strength of their natural parts and endowments."

Some are offended at the repetitions of our Liturgy; and it is readily admitted, that neither this nor any other human composition is perfect. But Bishop Hopkins, speaking to those offended at the frequent recurrence of the same requests, says, "It is much in their own power," that is, by due watchfulness, dependence on Christ, and the like, "to make them to be either vain repetitions, or the most fervent ingeminations of their most affectionate desires unto God, and the most spiritual and forcible part of all their prayers and supplications." It may be observed, that there is nothing in Scripture against the lawfulness of using forms; and the form of prayer given by our Lord, with the direction, "When ye pray, say, Our Father," &c. (Luke xi. 2,) appears satisfactory, as was before observed, both as to the allowableness and expediency of forms. It may also be again remarked, how much of the whole Bible is a continued series of prayers, so that no one can pray judiciously, and at length, without bringing in many scriptural forms of prayer.

The candid testimony of those who dissent from us is very satisfactory respecting the excellence of our Liturgy Doddridge, writing to a member of a dissenting congregation, says, "I doubt not, but many pious souls in the Established Church, have daily converse with God, in the offices of it, and I heartily rejoice in the thought." The eloquent and excellent Robert Hall of Leicester, speaks still more decidedly, and says of the Liturgy, "Though a Protestant Dissenter, I am by no means insensible to its merits: I believe that the Evangelical purity of its sentiments, the chastened fervor of its devotion, and the majestic simplicity of its language, have combined to place it in the very first rank of uninspired compositions."

It is promised to the Church, "Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers:" and who that has a just and enlarged view of the various talents and characters of those who minister in holy things, and of the difficulty of always choosing fit instruments, but must

rejoice, that, in our National Establishment, whoever ministers, there is a devout and scriptural Liturgy, in which the congregation may join and worship God in spirit and in truth?

Places set apart for public worship, are not only necessary for us to assemble ourselves together, but the habit of meeting there only for religious purposes, has also a tendency to withdraw our minds from the world. There is a relative holiness about them, as they are set apart for holy ends, like the hill of Sion. One of the greatest instances of our Lord's displeasure was for the profanation of the temple. Mark xi. 17. There may, however, be an erroneous idea of sanctity attached to the place where we worship. If we consider a church as the proper dwelling-place of God, where he is nearer to us to hear our prayers, or ascribe to it an imaginary sanctity, rendering our devotions more holy, we mistake the use of God's house. "The Most High dwells not in temples made with hands:" and our Lord teaches us to worship, not in any particular place, but "in spirit and in truth."

To assist in this, the following directions are added.

I. *A due approach to the house of God.*

Prepare for public worship. The preparation of the heart is requisite before prayer. "Prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands towards him."* Amos, (ch. iv. 12.) tells us, "Prepare to meet thy God." While this applies more particularly to God's coming to Israel in wrath and judgment, let it also direct us to a suitable preparation of mind in all our intercourse with him, "whose name is Holy." We are to "remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy."† Respecting the duties of the Sabbath in particular, it is profitable to think of them, and prepare for them, the evening before. Sir Matthew Hale says to his children, "I would not have you meddle with any recreations, pastimes, or ordinary work of your calling, from Saturday night at eight o'clock, till Monday morning. For though I am not apt to think that Saturday night is part of the Christian Sabbath, yet it is fit thus to prepare the heart for it." We should not rush hastily into the

* Job xi 13. † Exod xx.

Divine presence. "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him."* That great and glorious Lord and Savior, who "holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, and who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks,"† is especially present. The Apostle seems to intimate, that the angels who are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation," attend in Christian assemblies. 1 Cor. xi. 10. We should feel with David, "holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever,"‡ and shall thus be led to see that a due preparation of heart is suitable and needful. If you can, then, obtain time and opportunity for this purpose, I would exhort you to prepare your hearts by secret prayer and reading the Scriptures. It has been found by some to be a good practice to read the Lessons of the day before the service. One eminently good man was accustomed to spend most of the Sabbath morning in secret prayer and meditation, and was wont to say, "We many times blame the minister, when the fault is our own, that we have not prayed for him as we should."

Be watchful over your spirit in going. Much of our spirituality and comfort in public worship depends on the state of mind in which we come. We should, as far as may be, abstain not only from worldly business, but worldly conversation and thoughts on the Sabbath. "A dream cometh," says Solomon, "through the multitude of business."§ If you are conversing or thinking on the things of this world till you enter the house of God, how is it possible that your heart can at once be raised to God?

Earnestly aim at going thither in the *spirit of prayer* looking upwards for the divine blessing to give life, efficacy and unction to the outward service. It would be happy for us if we could always go in that spirit which David describes: "O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary."‖ When we come in any thing of this spirit, how different a

* Ps. lxxxix. 7. † Rev. ii. 7 ‡ Ps. xciii. 5.
§ Eccles. v. 3. ‖ Ps. lxiii. 1, 2.

service is public worship from what it is when we come carelessly! How humbling, how awful, how elevating!

Let us also go in the *spirit of praise*. "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."* We should come up to his house with a thankful, grateful spirit; with the feeling of children going to their parents; not in the spirit of bondage, but in the spirit of adoption. A dutiful child, entirely dependent on the bounty, wisdom, and love of its kind father, after experiencing the contempt or unfriendly treatment to which a stranger in a foreign country is exposed, loves to go to the father's dwelling. While we are in this hostile and ensnaring world, it is our privilege to do so; "to serve the Lord with gladness, and come before his presence with singing. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise."

Yet let holy joy be ever connected with *Godly fear*. The Jews were commanded, "Reverence my sanctuary."† And Solomon's directions should be often in our thoughts‡: "Keep thy foot," (watch and mark all the motions of soul and body, restraining all that would be unbecoming) "when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to offer the sacrifice of fools. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God, for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few."‖ We should endeavor to have that lively impression of the divine presence, which pervaded Jacob's mind, after his intercourse with his God; "Surely the Lord is in this place—how dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."§ The more just and lively views we have of God's character, presence, and glory, the more we shall seek to honor him. This reverence St. Paul urges; "Let us have grace," (we cannot do without it,) "whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear."¶

Closely connected with this reverence will be *deep self-abasement*. We may always observe this, when God's servants have had near approaches to him, or a true view of his glory, they have been greatly humbled in the sense of their own sinfulness; as Abraham, "Behold, now I have

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* Ps. cxxii. 1. † Lev. xix. 30. ‡ Eccles. v. 1, 2.
§ Gen. xxxviii. 16, 17. ‖ Heb. xii. 28

taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes;"* or as Job, "Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth;"† or as Isaiah, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips; and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts."‡ We should come with that feeling which Daniel well expresses, "We do not present our supplications before thee, O Lord, for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies."§

II. *A due behavior in the house of God.*

Those who come with the views and feelings which I have mentioned, will readily admit the propriety and follow the practice of the custom among us, first to seek in private the grace of God to help us in our worship. Let this be done briefly and fervently; constantly, but not formally.‖

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* Gen. xviii. 27. † Job xl. 4. ‡ Isa. vi. 5. § Dan. ix. 18.

‖ I cannot here but quote an admirable prayer of Bonnel's: his Biographer says, "When he came early to church, and could get to a retired place, he continued at his private devotions until the public service began, or a very little before; and how he employed those happy moments of privacy and devotion in the house of God, the following prayer, mentioned as used by him in the Church before morning prayer began, will show:

"Behold, O Lord, this portion of thy family, whom in this place thou hast so often graciously visited and favored; and who, having addicted and given up ourselves to thy service, are here met together in behalf of ourselves and of the rest of our happy number, and of all our Christian brethren, even thy whole Church. We beseech thee to unite our hearts more and more in thyself, that we may have but one heart, and one mind, as we have but one design, one aim, and hope. Let us now welcome each other with hearts full of love and joy, into thy presence, as we hope one day to welcome each other in thy presence in glory. Let our civil respects before thy service begins, be such hearty and holy salutations as the blessed Elizabeth gave to the mother of our Lord, and may we have leave to say to each other, 'Hail, thou that art favored of God the Lord is with thee!' Behold, we come with united hearts, to beg of thee the confirming of thy grace and favor to us; we come to present ourselves before thee, with most thankful acknowledgments for thy mercies received, and to adore thee who hast so graciously visited us. We come humbly to implore of thee strength against our respective temptations and difficulties in life; to beseech thee to supply all our weaknesses; to make us happily victorious against all our corruptions; and more than conquerors through thee who hast loved us. But, O our bountiful Lord God! if it be such joy to meet

The great thing is to keep our minds and affections fixed on the duty before us, so as to be able to say, "This one thing I do." Aim, then, to have the mind engaged, and affections excited suitable to every part of the service. Protestants see at once the folly of praying in an unknown tongue; but, unless the heart join in the prayer—unless, when the minister "bless with the Spirit, he that occupieth the room of the unlearned, say, Amen," (i. e.) really join with his heart "at thy giving of thanks,"* it is as unprofitable as if he prayed in a foreign language. Prayers are not to be heard as sermons, but to be really offered up to God in the desire of the heart. In the word read and preached by the minister, let us hear God speaking, and receive it in faith. In joining the confessions of sin, let memory bring before you your particular transgressions; and let your hearts confess as well as your lips. In petitions for pardon and a supply of necessities, let faith realize the power and willingness of God to give. In praying for others, remember, God's children are members of that one body to which you are united; and those now in darkness may yet be fellow-members of the same body. Truly desire their best good. In thanksgiving, call to mind your own particular mercies. and your utter unworthiness of them. Our hearts should overflow with gratitude, while our mouth is filled with praise. We should have David's feelings—"O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together."†

But in all, have an especial reference to the mediation, intercession, and grace of Christ. Vain are all the foregoing rules and hints, without the Spirit of Christ in your heart. You cannot really, or profitably, practise one of them, unless the Holy Spirit be in you; for however necessary rules and precepts may be, never yet was a Christian formed by rules alone, but by the Spirit of Christ giving life to the letter, and writing the rule in the heart. He is

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those whom we love now in thy presence, what will it be to meet ten thousand glorified spirits, each of which we shall love infinitely more in thy kingdom of glory than we can do any creature here! Glory be to thee, O Lord of glory and of love, who hast given us such present pleasure in thy service, and such comfortable hopes of those eternal good things which thou hast prepared for them that love thee. Amen."

* 1 Cor. xiv. 16. † Ps. xxxiv. 3.

present.* By faith, then, realize his presence. It spreads a savor—it imparts a life and beauty—it throws a glory upon Christian assemblies. Believe, then, the Lord Jesus Christ to be standing in the midst of his people, giving power to the prayers, and efficacy to the blessing at the close, and offering up in heaven all those petitions which you have made on earth.

While the prayers which the minister has to read alone are repeating, do not accompany him by your voice, or in whispers: this well-meaning people sometimes do: but it disturbs the devotions of others. The thing to be aimed at is, that your heart go along with all the service, desiring every blessing, and holding unseen communion with God.

And, Christian reader, may I not appeal to you, that when you have come to the house of God in the spirit of prayer, and with an earnest longing to enjoy the presence of God, and the communion of saints with your fellow Christians, you have found in some of the pathetic expressions of our Liturgy, that nearness to God, and that intercourse with him, which has been to your own mind a manifest fulfilment of the promise to be present with us when we meet in his name. For instance, in repeating those earnest entreaties for mercy at the end of the Litany, "O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us! O Christ, hear us!" have you not, in happy moments, found your hearts deeply affected, elevated, and drawn out to the Savior?

The spiritual worship of God in every part of the service, without wandering or distracted thoughts, is one of the highest attainments of the Christian, and perhaps not to be expected on this side of the grave; but, alas, how far from this are we in general! The writer mourns his own continual failure of spiritual worship, while he is endeavoring to exhort others to seek its attainment. It has been observed, "How empty would our congregations be sometimes, if no more bodies were present than there are souls? And what abundance of sorry service hath our God that nobody sees!" This subject will be more fully considered hereafter. See chapter xi.

The *hearing of the truth* in faith, humility, and love, is a most important part in the solemnities of public worship.

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* Matth. xviii. 20.

On this, however, we cannot here enlarge. Let it only be observed, that the more we can hear with a devout heart, with a soul continually darting up holy desires that God would send home to our hearts what we hear, the more we thus hear with self-application and earnest prayer, the more profit we shall receive.

After the close of the service, you should be glad of the pause allowed in all well-ordered congregations, for secret prayer to God, that he may pardon every imperfection, and impress all that you have heard on your heart.

III. *A due return from worship.*

Alas! how alive is the great adversary to rob us of every good which we may obtain! The benefit and comfort of meeting our fellow Christians in a solemn act of worship, are often lost by the vain or trifling conversation with them, which so frequently succeeds immediately on leaving the church. Is it not the fulfilling of that saying, "When they have heard, Satan cometh immediately and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts?"*

Christians should aim at carrying on the benefits of public worship by suitable, spiritual, and heavenly conversation, while obliged to be in company. And they should, when practicable, retire as soon as may be from the church to the closet, to examine what has been the state of their minds, and to meditate and pray over what they have heard and done. It would greatly assist in impressing the sermon deeply on your heart, to turn, as soon as may be after hearing it, the substance of it into a prayer; confessing the sins that have been brought home to your conscience, and asking for grace to fulfil the duties that have been enforced. O that all ministers had such hearers!

Lactantius says, "That is not true religion which is left at the church. The holy and heavenly principles enforced, or exercised there, should be carefully nourished to influence the life." The Church of Christ would soon assume a far brighter character, did we duly improve this great means of grace.

But as there is danger of a careless return, so there is danger of *self-righteousness.* Mixed and defiled as all our services are, yet through the blindness of our minds, we

* Mark, iv. 15.

are apt to think we are something when we are nothing. Though it is the highest act of divine mercy that God is willing to hear us, we are ready to fancy that we are doing something for him, and put him under an obligation by praying. I appeal to those who have watched their hearts for the truth of this. O beware of this self-righteous spirit which would taint all you do. "When you shall have done all those things which are commanded you, (and who has done this? but supposing the case) say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do."*

Yet let not any (for we are apt to err on every side) be too much *discouraged by the strictness recommended.* The writer freely confesses how much he falls short of what he recommends; "the good I would, I do not; the evil I would not, that I do." Let the conviction of our falling short only lead us to see the necessity of a total surrender to the righteousness of our crucified, risen, and interceding Savior; and to come more simply to him for strength to do that which is of manifest excellence, and a plain duty.

CHAPTER VII.

FAMILY WORSHIP.†

There are some very important means of grace, and outward observances, which are plainly implied in the word of God, for the performance of which we have few, if any, positive, plain, and express precepts. We are left to gather them from the examples of holy men, and from various incidental circumstances: such, in some degree, is the duty of public, and such more plainly is the duty of family worship.

The reasons may be these. The Christian dispensation is designed as a religion for people in every country, and in every situation in which a human being can be placed.

* Luke, xvii. 10.

† The greatest part of this chapter may perhaps be read with advantage by the master of a family, when first beginning to attend to this duty.

It is more of a spiritual transaction between God and the soul than the Mosaic dispensation was. Had there then been positive precepts respecting the means of grace, and the circumstantials of religion, and particularly respecting time, place, or frequency, the tender conscience, of which God has ever manifested particular regard, would necessarily have been burdened when placed in situations where the duty was impracticable."*

By this, also, another important end is answered. A trial is made of men's spirits. It is seen, whether, because a positive precept cannot be brought requiring its performance, men will neglect a duty plainly implied. Thus more of the real state of our minds is discovered, and it is manifested whether we have, or have not, a full and ardent love for God, his worship, and service.

It will not, however, be difficult to prove the *obligation* to family worship in various ways.

Consider *the example of Abraham*, the father of the faithful, and the friend of God. His family piety is that for which he is blessed by Jehovah himself: "I know Abraham, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." Abraham is here commended for instructing his children and his household in the most important of all duties, "the way of the Lord," the great doctrines of religion, and "justice and judgment," its great duties. And observe, "he will command" them; that is, he will use that just authority which God gives the father and head of a family in the religious instruction of his children. Abraham also prayed with, as well as instructed his family. Wherever he fixed his tent, there he built an altar to the Lord.—This we read he did in the plain Moriah. And when he removed to a mountain on the east of Bethel, "there he built an altar, and called upon the name of the Lord."† Now we may say to those who neglect family worship, that as all real Christians are "Abraham's seed,"‡ "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham."§ Your neglect of this

* See Cecil's Remains.

† Gen. xii. 7, 8.

‡ Gal. iii. 29.

§ John, viii. 39.

duty, tends to show that you do not really belong to Christ.*

The *examples of other holy men* are similar to that of Abraham. Consider the holy determination of Joshua, who declared to all Israel, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve; as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."† Neither the exalted station which he occupied, nor his various and pressing public labors, prevented his attention to the religion of his family. When David had brought the ark of God into Jerusalem with gladness, sacrifices, and thanksgivings, after discharging all his public duties, and blessing the people in the name of the Lord of Hosts, "he returned to bless his household."‡ In addition to these might be brought the examples of Job, (ch. i. 5.) Daniel, (ch. vi. 10.) and others. While the ark rested in the house of Obed-edom, a blessing came on him and all his household. Would you then obtain the blessing of your household, let your family be daily assembled for prayer and praise. Observe the praise given to Cornelius; he was "a devout man, and one that feared God, with all his house; which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway."§ The early Christians practised this duty. St. Paul greets the Church in the house of Priscilla and Aquila, when they were at Rome,‖ and sends the salutation of the Church that was in their house when they were in Asia.¶ We may probably gather hence, that he alludes rather to the assembly of a religious family than to that of a stated congregation.** When Peter was released by the angel from prison, "he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, where many were gathered together praying."††

These examples are brought forward to show you, that

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* Let us also notice the principle which influenced Abraham—"If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory." But he utterly renounced such ideas. In pleading before God, how he abases himself! "Behold, now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes!" Abraham was justified by faith, and relying on the promises of God, his heart was filled with love, and hence he sought to impart to his family those spiritual blessings which he himself enjoyed.

† Josh. xxiv. 15. ‡ 2 Sam. vi. 20. § Acts, x. 2.

‖ Rom. xvi. 3. ¶ 1 Cor. xvi. 19.

** See also Col. iv. 15; Philemon, 2. †† Acts xii. 12.

in duly attending to family worship, you are "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

The *example of Jesus Christ* confirms the obligation arising from that of good men. He was the head of his family, and his Apostles belong to his household.* We perpetually read how he instructed them in private, and asked them various questions as to their religious knowledge.† He often prayed with his disciples.‡ You call yourself a Christian; then remember, "he that saith he abideth in him, ought himself so to walk, even as he walked."§

Threatenings are pronounced *against those who disregard this duty.* Those who neglect the worship of God in their families, lie (awful thought!) under the displeasure of the Almighty, under the frown of the Most High. Observe what is said,‖ "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name." Now, if the heathen and their families are to be thus punished, judge you what will become of those families in a Christian land, living as heathens, without regard to God and his worship. Indeed, "if any provide not for his own, and especially for his own house, (both in temporal and spiritual things) he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."¶ Ah, Christian, if you have hitherto neglected this duty, you should, without delay, "fly for refuge to the hope set before you in the Gospel;" seek for pardon through the blood of Christ: and henceforth "walk in newness of life." Yes, begin "to-day, while it is called to-day,"** to practise the duty.

Family prayer has also some peculiar advantages. It is *a most important means of propagating piety to posterity.* Children are creatures of imitation. They love to copy all that they see in others. The characters of unborn generations may depend on your conduct in this matter.†† David says of the Lord, "He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children, that the generations to come might know them, even the chil-

* Matt. x. 25.
† Matt. xiii. 51; xvi. 13.
‡ Luke, ix. 18; xi. 1.
§ 1 John, ii. 6.
‖ Jer. x. 25.
¶ 1 Tim. v. 8.
** Heb. iii 13.
†† Eph. vi. 4; Prov. xxii. 6

dren which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children, that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments."* Perhaps the present degraded condition of the millions of immortal souls now living in idolatry, with all their guilt and misery, might be traced up to the neglect of family instruction, as one principal cause.

Family worship, when duly conducted, is *attended with many happy effects on your whole family*. No wonder that those who neglect this, are continually troubled with the misconduct and perverseness of those under them and about them; no wonder that jarrings, dissensions, and other disagreeable circumstances, are continually disquieting them. It is just what might be expected. How can they, who neglect the worship of God in their families, look for peace or comfort in them? I am sure, also, that I may confidently appeal to those who have regular and daily family prayer, that, when conducted in a simple and devout spirit, it has a tendency to remove, or allay, all those unhappy passions to which our common nature is subject, and which, more or less, appear in every family. It unites the members of the family together, gives the head of it a feeling of tenderness and affection for those under him, and makes them esteem and love him. Some masters are, on this account, almost considered as angels in their families. Cecil says of family worship rightly conducted, "It may be used as an engine of vast power in a family. It diffuses a sympathy through the members. It calls the mind off from the deadening effects of worldly affairs. It arrests every member with a morning and evening sermon, in the midst of all the hurries and cares of life. It says, 'There is a God!' 'There is a spiritual world!' 'There is a life to come!' It fixes the idea of responsibility in the mind. It furnishes a tender and judicious father or master, with an opportunity of gently glancing at faults, where a direct admonition might be inexpedient. It enables him to relieve the weight with which subordination or service often sits on the minds of inferiors."

Family prayer gains for us *the presence and blessing of our Lord*. There is a promise of his presence, which appears peculiarly applicable to this duty.† Many have found

* Ps. lxxviii. 5, 7. † Matt. xviii. 19, 20

in family worship, that help and that communion with God which they had sought for with less effect in private prayer. It was the experience of one Christian, "I find more of the presence of God, and more of the real spirit of prayer, in praying with my family, than in almost any other means of grace." Surely, the Christian, who really loves his Savior, would regularly call his family together to pray with him from this consideration alone, that he might enjoy more of his Lord's presence.

Dr. Buchanan strikingly *contrasts a family which worships God, and a family which worships him not;* and the excellence of the remarks will justify the length of the quotation. "How painful it is to reflect," he says, "that there should be, in this kingdom, many domestic societies among whom the worship of the Deity is not known, in whose houses no grateful accents are ever heard, no exultation of heart for the divine goodness! There are, indeed, accents of exultation and mirth: 'and the harp, and the viol, and the tabret, and the pipe, are in their feasts:' but there is no remembrance of God: 'they regard not the operation of his hands.' While even inanimate nature, in a certain sense, offereth praise to the great Creator, and fulfilleth his will; *these* men pass through life in silence! Insensible to the mercies, or judgments, or power, or providence of the unseen God; yes, more insensible than the inhabitants of heathen lands, upon whom the light of truth has never shined.

"How different is the scene which is presented in those happy families, where the voice of prayer and thanksgiving consecrates every day! where the word of God is devoutly read, and the infants are taught to lisp their Creator's praise. There, from day to day, domestic peace, and love, and harmony, are cherished by the sublimest motives, and strengthened by the tenderest and most powerful sanctions. On the hallowed day they repair, with gladness of heart, to their respective places of worship, and mingle with assemblies which meet with much more delight for praise and prayer than other assemblies for worldly mirth. And let not the world contemn or disturb their holy exercise: for we learn from Scripture, that it is from such families and assemblies, who are 'the salt of the earth, worshipping in the midst of us, that the incense of prayer ascends *in be*

half of the country, and is accepted in heavenly places through the intercession of the Mediator."

Though these reasons would of themselves be sufficient to establish this duty, and therefore be a sufficient answer to any objections, it may be proper to consider some of the objections usually made.

One objection sometimes offered is, *I have no ability to pray in my family.* I have no talents or gifts for this work, and should only expose myself. It has been remarked, "This is almost the only case in which people are apt to have a very mean opinion of their own abilities. But this is not the language of Christian humility." Let me reply to the objection in the words of Milner—"It is acknowledged that many are unfit for such an undertaking, and there are those who are forward to attempt things, for which (at least till they have more experience) they are not qualified. But we have good and sound forms of prayer,* easily procured, which you may make use of on these occasions. Surely, if you attend to this practice, in a hearty, conscientious way, avoiding an unmeaning, cold formality, which is the too common bane of things of this nature, you may expect the divine blessing to accompany it to yourselves and your households."

Another objection is, *I am afraid of being ridiculed*, or thought unnecessarily precise and strict. This, though not much brought forward, has frequently great weight with those who neglect this duty. Now, here, I say the irreligion of others is the very reason why you should be faithful to God. Imitate here the holy example of Noah, Abraham, Joshua, and all the servants of God. If your religion were real, though you stood alone in the whole world, it might still be said of you, in the striking expressions of Milton—

> ————"faithful found
> Among the faithless, faithful only he
> Among innumerable false, unmoved,
> Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified,
> His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal:
> Nor number, nor example, with him wrought
> To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind,
> Though single." *Paradise Lost, Book V.*

* As those of Cotterill, Knight, Bean, Swete, and Jenks; and Short Prayers for every Morning and Evening, by the Religious Tract Society. Some prayers are added at the end of this Treatise

Perhaps in this very thing, God is bringing the touchstone to your character: he here tries you whether you will indeed confess Christ before men. Remember, then, "if we deny him, he will also deny us; if we confess him before men, he will also confess us before his Father and the holy angels in heaven." Some have regular family worship in general, but when they have any friend in the house, unaccustomed to this service, they are induced by the fear of man, or perhaps the pretence of not giving offence, to neglect it. This conduct is utterly unworthy of a true Christian.

Others object, *I have not time for the duty;* I am engaged in business from morning to night. Is this true? then surely you, who have so much to do, above all men, ought especially to seek the favor and help of God. His blessing "maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it:" but without it, all your endeavors and labors will profit you nothing; they will never make you happy. But have you never any leisure for amusement, for vanity, trifling, and folly? Remembering that God knows how you employ all your time, will you venture to say, that you cannot collect your family together for a few minutes in the morning and in the evening? Have you time to provide food for their perishing bodies, which last but a few days, but no time to dispense the bread of life to their never-dying souls? The want of time proceeds in most cases from indisposition to the duty; or, at best, from want of due management. If you appoint those stated and fixed times which shall be found most convenient, and keep to them regularly, you will find that it will be as as easy to collect your family together, and as indispensable to have regular family prayer, as it is to have your daily meals.

Some bring an objection of another kind—*I should meet with opposition from some in the family.* Are you only an inferior member of the family? you should still, at proper times, use what influence you have to obtain so great a blessing;* and if you cannot succeed in your attempts, God

* I know an instance of a child in a family, where this duty was neglected, upon her return from a visit in another, where it was daily performed, being the instrument of effecting a reform in this particular, by only asking her parents, "Why can we not have daily family prayer?" The remonstrance of the child, through God's blessing, was effectual.

will not lay the sin of neglecting family worship to your charge. But whatever weight this objection may have with those in inferior stations in the family, sure I am that this objection should have no weight with the master, or the head of the family. Do not have thus plainly to confess that you fear man rather than God. Remember, that you are responsible for the duties of that station in which you are placed. Be firm, and of good courage, in this matter; and, whatever you may give up of your own ease and inclination in worldly things, for the sake of quietness and rest, give *nothing* up, where it concerns your duty, the good of immortal souls, and the glory of God, to be firm and resolute. See Ps. ci.

But you say, *I do pray with my family on a Sunday.* It is certainly better thus to collect your family together on the Sabbath, than not at all; but you are required to instruct your family, not merely on Sunday, "but when you lie down, and when you rise up."* Your limited performance of the duty shows that you do not really love and enjoy it; if you did, you would be more frequent in practising it. And I may appeal to you whether you and your family do not generally find it a weariness, (Mal. i. 13,) after the duties of the Sabbath, to be engaged in a service which daily custom and habit have not yet made necessary and delightful.

But is not the real, though not the avowed objection, this, *I am afraid of too great a restraint on myself?* I am afraid that more will be expected from me; that I must be more consistent in my character, and more circumspect in my conduct. Look well into your hearts if this be not the real difficulty; and if it be, only consider what a sad mark it is of a man's spiritual condition, when he is afraid of a restraint on his sins. Job xxi. 14, 15.

Howe observes, "We should look on family religion, not merely under the notion of a duty, and as imposed; but as a *privilege*, and a singular vouchsafement of grace that there may be such a thing."

"It hath been accounted so even in the very Pagan world. A divine presence, to have a *Numen* at hand and ready, how great a privilege hath it been reckoned! In the dark and dismal days of Popery, when that hath been *regnant*,

* Deut. vi. 7.

what a terrible thing it has been counted to excommunicate a nation, to put it under an interdict! Now let us consider this matter so. What if, instead of being bidden to pray in our families, we should be forbidden to pray in them? Make but that fearful supposition. Suppose there should be a special interdict on your house, and that by some particular signification of the mind of God from heaven it should be said, 'I will have no worship of God out of this house! from your house I will accept no sacrifice! I will hear no prayer!' What a terrible doom were this! What a dark and horrid cloud would be drawn over that habitation, if it should be said, 'Here shall be no prayers, here shall be no mention of the name of God!' So that as in a like case represented to us in reference to the people of the Jews—the poor forlorn members of that family should say, 'We may not make mention of the name of the Lord,"* what a dismal thing were this!"†

Trusting, then, that the reader is now satisfied as to the duty and privilege of daily family prayer, and only wishes to know how he may best practise it; we will make some remarks with reference to the *due performance of family worship.*

Every head of a family should consider himself as the minister or priest of his own family. It is, if we may use the expression, his parish, and he should consider that he is as responsible to God for the welfare of the souls thus committed to him, as the minister is on a larger scale. The sin of omission lies at his door, if it be neglected. "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven," may be applied to their spiritual as well as their temporal wants. Let the head of the family, then, consider it his duty and his privilege to conduct family worship.

A preparation of mind for this duty, by taking a few moments of retirement for self-recollection and prayer, has been found by many to be highly advantageous.

Where circumstances will admit of it, read the Scrip-

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* Amos vi. 10.

† Howe's Works, vol. v. p. 413. The whole Tract entitled "The Obligations to Family Religion and Worship," is well worthy of a serious and attentive perusal.

tures, and sing a Psalm or Hymn, as well as pray with your family.

Read the Scriptures: a portion from one Testament in the morning, and from the other in the evening. Both the Old and the New Testament are thus constantly brought before your families. If you pursue a regular course, going through one book before you begin another, your lesson will always be found for you. Those who have the talent of explaining the Scriptures in an impressive and lively way to their families, (and this talent will increase as it is used) will be able to give much additional interest by a few short observations on what has been read. Those who have not this talent, may find excellent helps for this purpose; as the Practical Observations in Scott's Bible, in Doddridge's Exposition of the New Testament, or selections from Matthew Henry. Only in all take care to be brief, practical, familiar, and serious. Any thing long, or critical, is out of place, and tedious. Let each member of the family bring a Bible. Some have found that it helps to keep alive their attention, to refer them occasionally to parallel passages, one of the family reading the passage.* The reading of the Scriptures daily in family worship, is a plain and positive duty. How can you otherwise fulfil the express directions of the Scriptures themselves? Deut. vi. 7.

Occasionally *sing a Psalm or Hymn.* When you have time, and your family can join together in singing, this adds much to the cheerfulness of family devotion. "Psalmody," says Dr. Hammond, "made up a very great part of the devotions of the primitive Christians, both in the public assembly, and more privately in the family, and in their retirements in the closet." When our Lord had instructed his family, the twelve Apostles, he sung an hymn with them, (Matt. xxvi. 30,) and then prayed with them. John

* Some have found it an excellent practice, and it is one which is recommended to pious masters and mistresses, to take some time in the course of the Sabbath, or any other fixed time that may be more convenient, to converse apart with each member of the family on the subject of religion, giving them suitable advice. This has been attended with the happiest effects. It discovers the true state of your family—enables you better to pray for them, and with them—and gives you many happy opportunities of arousing the careless, strengthening the weak, encouraging the desponding, and confirming the strong.

xvii. This great example may encourage us to "go and do likewise." St. Paul says, "Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in Psalms and Hymns, and spiritual songs: singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."* Anticipate thus, on earth, the songs of the blessed above. Learn here below the employments of heaven, and fulfil the promise, "the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion, with songs, and everlasting joy upon their head."†

Conclude with Prayer. To some, God has evidently given the spirit of grace and supplication, so that they can, after some practice and experience, pour out with ease and fluency the continued and refreshing stream of holy feelings and ardent devotion. This gift is bestowed on them for the benefit of others, and they ought freely to use it. It is also a gift which may be more generally attained than is commonly supposed. Many pious poor, without human learning, possess it in a great degree. Let others use good forms. Happy are the families that have devout and heavenly-minded masters or parents, who pray for them in private, and edify them by praying with them!

The Lord's prayer seems particularly appropriate as a family prayer; and while comprehending the case and circumstances of the Universal Church, it still has a reference to that church under the idea of a family, "a whole family," one in heart and mind, however separated or dispersed in person.

After those directions which have been given respecting private, the less need be said on family prayer.

Respecting the *proper subjects* to be mentioned, there are some things which may, with great propriety and interest, be brought before the family altar.

Any particular circumstances which have occurred should be mentioned. Is any member of the family unwell? the prayer of faith may save the sick. Is any afflicted? "Call upon God in the time of trouble, and he will deliver him." Has any member left your family for a season? by praying for him, "though absent in body," you will be "present in spirit, serving the Lord." Are any changes about to take place, or any scheme to be effected, in which the family are interested—any one about to join or to leave the house

* Eph. v. 19; see also Col. iii. 16. † Isa. xxxv. 10.

hold? are any special means of grace, confirmation, baptism, or the Lord's Supper before you? these things may properly be mentioned, and their due improvement be requested of God in family prayer.

Much of the substance of the Scriptures which you have read, may generally be advantageously turned into prayer. This, while it gains the blessing and averts the evil about which you pray, will also impress the passages of Scripture more deeply in the mind and on the heart, and will prevent sameness and repetition of expression.

These local circumstances induce the writer to think that extempore prayer is often more suitable and affecting for a family, than a form of prayer.* Nor is the objection that those who pray with you do not know what is coming, and therefore cannot join you, a really solid one. Experience confirms the remark of Bishop Wilkins, "that as a man may in his judgment assent unto any divine truth delivered in a sermon which he never heard before, so may he join in his affections unto any holy desire which he never before heard."

But to sum up the heads of family prayer in a few words, attend to these four things.

Family sins. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another."† "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."‡ This habitual, periodical, and mutual confession, morning and evening, of your mutual infirmities, your pride, your selfishness, your impatience, and your sinfulness, will have a great tendency also to soften down what is harsh and forbidding, and to unite you together.

Family wants, whether spiritual or temporal. Here is a large scope for daily prayer. And here you may pray that all may fulfil their relative duties, whether it be as father and mother, husband and wife, master and mistress, inmate, servant and child; and that all may apply themselves faithfully, constantly, and diligently, in their respective

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* The writer is far from desiring to press this on all. He knows several good and judicious men who use forms. It is utterly wrong in any to think worse of those who do so, and to consider them on that account as deficient in the gift of prayer. Do not such rather prove their own deficiency? for the true gift of prayer will be followed by charity, tenderness, and humility.

† James v. 16. ‡ James iv. 10.

situations, to the work which God has given them to do; that they may exhibit the truth of David's saying, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

Family friends. The parents, brothers, sisters, relatives, and friends, of those assembled together, and the minister by whom they are instructed, should not be forgotten. Your immediate neighborhood, the town in which you dwell, the nation to which you belong, all in authority, and especially the cause and Church of Christ throughout the world, the Jews and the benighted Gentiles, should all have place in your prayers.

Family mercies. In the morning, after having been kept in safety throughout the defenceless hours of night, free from fire, accidents, or disturbance; in the evening, when the wants of the family for the day have all been supplied, it is surely right, and almost natural for you to unite in acknowledging God's mercies. That you have "bread enough and to spare:" that you have light, life, liberty, health, and strength, call for your united praise. But above all, "the common salvation,"* offered to you all; "the common faith,"† which you all profess to receive; the union in Jesus Christ—"One body and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all:"‡ all these things bestowed on Christians, through the inestimable love of God in Christ Jesus, require you to offer united sacrifices of thanksgiving.

Grace before and after meals is another part of family prayer, which no Christian master can neglect. The Apostle, after reproving those who commanded to abstain from meats, goes on to assert, "Which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving, of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer."§ In discharging this part of family worship, take heed of a few mere formal words. Be serious and devout in every approach to the great God.

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* Jude 3. † Titus i. 4. ‡ Eph. iv 4. 6
§ 1 Tim. iv. 3, 4, 5.

The *manner* of conducting family worship is of much importance. Be not on the one side needlessly tender about your own reputation in mere outward things, nor on the other careless and remiss. Let us have a greater awe of God's majesty than of man's presence. We will now notice some things to be avoided.

Some, by a voice too loud, or too low, or from using a particular whine or tone—or by a repulsive manner—by aiming at fine expressions, or by vulgar and coarse ones, or by excessive length, fatigue and perhaps disgust those whom they desire to edify. Let all be natural and simple, short and devout, and your voice such as you use in conversing with your friends on serious subjects. In the multiplied engagements of large towns, long prayers are not suited to the situations of most families; yet do not abridge the duty so as to make it a mere form, and as if you were glad to hurry through it. Seek, in short, to have your worship such that a piously-disposed family may rejoice when the time of prayer is come: and amid the cares, distractions and sorrows of life, may count it a relief and a privilege.

We have hitherto considered the duty of the Head of the Family. The *duties of those who join in family worship*, are, duly to prize the privilege, and to beware of a wandering, cold, and careless spirit, which will destroy all your benefit and comfort in it, whoever teaches, whoever prays. It is the joining of every heart in the requests offered up, which gives to family prayer its greatest efficacy. You should agree to ask; your spirit should join the spirit of him who prays; let there be a secret "Amen" in your hearts to every petition,* and thus you will obtain the promised blessing. And do not think it sufficient for you to have joined in family worship, and that you may then neglect secret prayer. Never forget to pray in secret also

What a lovely sight it is to see a whole family thus uniting together morning and evening, preparing and being made meet, day by day, for "the inheritance of the saints in light;" obtaining on earth the humble, dependent, thankful, holy, and heavenly state of mind, which fits them for joining the family of their Lord in heaven! Whatever storms rage without, such a family, obeying the direction,

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* 1 Cor. xiv. 16.

"Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, till the indignation be overpast,"* are safe. They are able to say, "God is our refuge and strength."†

May what has been said induce *those who have hitherto lived in the neglect of this duty*, to take up at once David's firm resolution, "Surely I will not go up into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob."‡ Let me beseech you—lose no time—not a single day. Difficulties may be multiplied; but only set about it in faith and prayer, wisely and vigorously, and they will all vanish. Say firmly, as Jacob did to his household, and to all that were with him, "Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments, and let us arise and go up to Bethel, and I will make there an altar unto God."§

And may *those who have attended to this duty*, find the hints that have been given, an additional help to the performance of it; and also feel pledged, by their prayers and instructions, to bring into the family in the day the character which they have manifested, and the graces which they requested in their united devotions.

But let them not think, as some have been ready to think, that a discharge of this duty will absolve them from the constant practice of daily morning and evening devotions in secret. He who prays only before others, has much reason to suspect that he prays to be seen of men, and has no real love to God, nor true knowledge of the nature of prayer.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOCIAL PRAYER.

THE term "social" may be applied to all kinds of prayer in which we join with others, but it is here restricted to the united prayer of Christian friends, distinct from public and

* Isa. xxvi. 20. † Ps. xlvi. 1. ‡ Ps. cxxxii. 3—5.
§ Gen. xxxv. 2.

family worship. It would be well if Christians were more accustomed than they are to sanctify their occasional meetings by prayer, and to meet also for the purpose of uniting in prayer to obtain those blessings which they need. The particular promise given to united prayer has led many to practise this both as a privilege and as a duty. "If two of you should agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."*

We have scriptural examples to encourage us to the performance of this. When Peter was in prison, "prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him;"† and when he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, he found there "many that were gathered together, praying."‡ When Paul and Silas were thrown into prison, they comforted each other by social prayer. "Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them."§ "When Moses' hands were heavy, Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side and the other on the other side, and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun." Bishop Hall remarks on this, "Doubtless Aaron and Hur did not only raise their hands but their minds with his; the more cords the easier draught. Aaron was brother to Moses. There cannot be a more brotherly office than to help one another in our prayers, and to excite our mutual devotions. No Christian may think it enough to pray alone: he is no true Israelite that will not be ready to lift up the weary hand of God's saints."‖

And as social prayer is a duty binding generally on all Christians, so there is a special reason for it in some particular relations. Husband and wife should pray together, with and for each other; the Apostle appears to suppose they do so, when he adds, as a reason for some directions given to them, that our prayers be not hindered."¶

There are some things which seem peculiarly to call for social prayer. Let me especially mention the state of the church of Christ in our own country, and throughout the world, as calling for our attention. The various precepts and examples in the word of God on this subject, and the

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* Matt. xviii. 19.

† Acts xii. 5.

‡ Acts xii. 12.

§ Acts xvi. 25.

‖ See Bishop Hall's Works.

¶ 1 Pet. iii. 7.

present remarkable signs of the times, evidently require the Christian's remembrance of this in all his social prayers. David gives us a solemn direction, and a copy of his prayer and determination on this subject:* "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sake, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good." This will lead to prayers for the enlargement of the borders of Sion, by the conversion of the heathen. Isa. lxii. Nor should the state of your own nation be forgotten. 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

St. Paul hoped for deliverance from his difficulties by the Corinthians, "helping together by prayer"† for him, and this supposes that Christians will unite in prayer for their minister. Remember then your minister in your social meetings: it will bring a blessing on him and yourselves also. Why should not those members of a family who are under the full influence of real religion unite, at stated periods, in praying for those of their relatives that are careless and regardless of its holy truths? There are various other things of general and personal, or local interest, that need not be here specified, which afford suitable subjects for social prayer.

It is a proof of the low state of religion among us, that many, and those even real Christians, (for of them only I speak,) can meet and part in our day without praying together. Is it feared that this might be counted strange and uncommon? this is only a weak objection. The devoted Christian is an uncommon character, and must expect to be often reproached for unnecessary strictness and preciseness. Have you reason to think that this would be an unwelcome service? surely, then, you should not voluntarily be much in the society of those who would think it such. Or may not another reason be, that the conversation, even among those who have professed to renounce the world and its vanities, is often so trifling, so worldly and so vain—so much about man, and so little about God, and Christ, and his word, and his love, that your souls are unprepared and unfitted for communion with him!‡

* Ps. cxxii. 6—9. † 2 Cor. i. 11.

‡ I cannot here but subjoin the remark which a valued friend made

Watts says, "If we pray among a select society of Christians, we draw near to God with a holy boldness, something like what we use in our duties of secret worship. We have reason to take more freedom among those that are fellow-saints, and whose hearts have felt many of the same workings with our own. Then, when our faith is lively, we should give thanks to God for our election in Christ Jesus; for the atonement and righteousness of the Son of God, in which we humbly hope to have an interest; for the enlightening and sanctifying work of his own Spirit upon our hearts; for our expectations of eternal glory: and by expressing the joys of our faith to God, we may often be made a means, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to raise the faith and joy of others."

Were your social meetings thus sanctified, the occasional intercourse of dear friends would be more blessed than it is. You would find it a means of grace, and would enjoy, in a much higher degree, the privilege of the communion of saints. You would find the prayers of those who can and do pray with freedom and fervency, a great help to your own attainment of this gift. Those who have the holy fire may be the means of enkindling the sacred flame in others. You would receive a greater blessing than you have yet done in all your family and social relations. "Persons who belong to several families may, and ought to meet on these occasions. The consent of importunity is a pleasing instance of brotherly love."

Those who *join in Social Prayer*, should guard against a spirit of criticism on the prayer which they hear, and en-

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on this passage. He says, "Conversation among Christians often takes a trifling turn, often a party turn in politics, and often one which merely concerns the circumstantials of things, and this for the evident purpose of excluding essentials. Thus the manner of a preacher, his style, his appearance, often occupy the place which is due to his matter. Or, if the matter be introduced, it is not for the purpose of enjoying its excellence, in turning it to the exciting of present good, but rather as a ground of critique on his mode of treatment, affording a subject of ingenious remark, if not of authoritative decision. There are religious Tattlers and Busy-Bodies, it is to be feared, as well as those of the world; but it should never be forgotten, that a religious gossip is less excusable than a worldly gossip. The object of the worldly is to kill time; and for this purpose characters are sported with, and idle tales and jokes indulged in. It should be the Christian's object to redeem the time, and to improve it by edifying his associates."

deavor to join in the desire intended, even when they think that the mode of expression is not altogether proper, or suitable. Watch against criticising and being offended with the mere words and manner of others. Those, indeed, who do pray, should take care to avoid occasions of offence, by simplicity and propriety in their mode of conducting the prayer. But when sinful creatures kneel together before their Almighty Creator, the solemnity of the work in which they are engaged, and the greatness of his Majesty, should prevent a rigid observance of each other. "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

In this, as in every means of grace, beware of any thing like ostentation, display, or self-righteousness. Endeavor to attain Christian simplicity, "and the meekness of wisdom."*

CHAPTER IX.

THE GENERAL HABIT OF PRAYER.

Hitherto we have dwelt on the various kinds of devotion, private, public, family, and social, which should each come in their course at stated times; but the believer's character, "I give myself unto prayer,"† shows that he is continually in the spirit of prayer. The Scriptures suppose that this is the habit of the Christian mind. Hence we find directions of this kind: "Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance."‡ "Pray without ceasing."§ "Continuing instant in prayer."‖

These directions are in some measure fulfilled, by a constant attention to those kinds of prayer we have before mentioned; but they may have a yet more complete fulfilment, in the habitual disposition of the Chistian's mind, his readiness at all times for prayer, and the exercise of this disposition in continual aspirations of soul, and desires expressed unto God in the midst of his other duties. These

* James iii. 13. † Ps. cix. 4. ‡ Eph. vi. 18.
§ 1 Thes. v. 17. ‖ Rom. xii. 12.

aspirations are both a great sign and means of our being spiritually minded.

Nor does this in any way hinder, but rather help attention to our various duties. A laborer's love to his family will often bring it to his mind during his work, but will only incline him to labor more constantly and cheerfully; and a Christian's love to his Savior will have the same effect. The breathing of the lungs, and the beating of the pulse, hinder not our being engaged in other work: and the lifting up of holy desires unto God, will only quicken us, and animate us in the performance of the daily labors of our life.

The expression of this state of mind has been sometimes called ejaculatory prayer; when there is a habit of prayer, there will frequently be short, earnest petitions darted up, on the moment, to the throne of grace.

Such an habitually devout disposition of mind, will make every action of your life holy. You will learn to do nothing without connecting it by prayer with the presence and glory of God. You will see nothing, and hear nothing, without its raising your heart to him. What a spiritual life may the Christian, improving every thing by prayer, lead! This will consecrate every field, every wood, and every dwelling-place. It will turn an ordinary walk into a morning or evening sacrifice. Making this heavenly use of earthly things, you will rapidly advance in conformity to the divine image, you will be strong in overcoming sin, and you will carry on schemes of good with a power which nothing can resist. In a moment you thus bring God, and his presence, and blessing, into the midst of all your concerns, and bring peace, love, and tranquillity amidst all the cares and tumults of life, into your own heart.

"How highly," says Cooke, "would a courtier prize a privy key of admittance to his sovereign at all times! This key we possess in ejaculatory prayer. It is a golden chain of union between earth and heaven."

This general spirit of devotion, prevailing in the heart at all times, is of such importance, that the chief number of *examples* of prayer which we find in the Holy Scriptures are of this kind. Were all these examples to be enumerated, it would be seen, that there is no situation, nor circumstance, in which we may be placed, where such a spirit will not be suitable, and in which the blessing of God may

not in this way be sought and obtained. It may be right to bring a few specimens from different parts of the sacred volume.

When the Patriarch Jacob, after much persuasion, at length permits his sons to take their youngest brother Benjamin, his heart sends up this short but earnest petition; "God Almighty give you mercy before the man."* When Joseph sees his brother Benjamin, he suddenly prays, "God be gracious unto thee, my son."†

When the Egyptians were behind the Israelites, and the Red Sea before them, and the mountains hemmed them in, and the people were repining and murmuring, in that great difficulty, the heart of Moses was with his God; and though we read of no outward prayer, yet God says to him, "Wherefore cryest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward."‡

In a similar great extremity, when the people talked of stoning David, he "encouraged himself in the Lord his God."§ And when, flying from his rebellious son Absalom, he was going up Mount Olivet, one told him that Ahithophel, his counsellor, was among the conspirators, David prayed, on the moment, as he was going up the hill, "O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness."‖

Nehemiah is an eminent example of the same spirit of prayer. You may observe it throughout his whole history. The following is an example. Being sorrowful in the presence of the king, and having stated the reason, the history goes on, "The King said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven, and I said unto the king, Send me unto Judah."¶ He doubtless means that he lifted up his heart to God, before he asked the king. You may see in various places how he thus brought all his actions in prayer before God, and entreated that he would remember him for them.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who left an example for us to follow, frequently thus addressed his Father. In the midst of the people, on one occasion, he said, "Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I into the world. Father, glorify thy name."** Again, on the cross he says,

* Gen. xliii. 14. † Gen. xliii. 29. ‡ Exod. xv. 15.
§ 1 Sam. xxx. 6. ‖ 2 Sam. xv. 31. ¶ Neh. ii. 4.
** John xii. 27.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me."* And he prayed there, not only for himself, but in the midst of his sufferings, beholding with pity his savage murderers, the mocking priests, and deriding people, his compassionate heart breathes out itself in the short and fervent prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."† O love, till then unknown! how should such an example teach us when reviled not to revile again, but rather to "pray for them that despitefully use" us!

The gracious answers vouchsafed to these prayers should encourage us to imitate the examples thus brought before us. Let us, then, fulfil our Lord's direction, "Praying always, that we may be accounted worthy to escape all these things, and to stand before the Son of Man."‡

We do not sufficiently attend to the *growth* of a devout spirit. We are too much content with former attainments, and often even fall short of them. But let us labor not only to keep our ground, but to make daily progress. The Christian's devotion should be like the flowing tide, which gradually gaining point after point, the retiring waves again and again returning, filling up all vacancies, advancing and still advancing, at length replenishes, in regular progress, the whole space. Let the spirit of devotion advance till it fill our whole souls.

Indeed, the truly-advanced Christian is known by this mark, as much as by any other. The man after God's own heart, is the man of devotion; one who is always in prayer; who says in the morning, "when I awake I am still with thee;" and in the evening, "I will both lay me down in peace and take my rest, for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety."§ In the midst of his business he is "fervent in spirit serving the Lord."‖ He can say, "On thee do I wait all the day."¶ "He," says Law, "is the devout man, who considers God in every thing, who serves God in every thing, who makes all the parts of his common life parts of piety, by doing every thing in the name of God, and under such rules as are conformable to his glory."

Men of this world, the covetous and the impure, the licentious and the gay, even when outwardly engaged in other things, have their minds full of their particular sins.

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* Matt. xxvii. 46. † Luke xxiii. 34. ‡ Luke xxi 36.
§ Ps. iv. 8. ‖ Rom. xii. 11. ¶ Ps. xxv. 5.

Let the Christian's heart then be filled with that great work in which he is engaged. As they pollute all their sacred duties by worldly thoughts, so let him consecrate all his common actions, by the constant and heavenly breathings of his soul unto God.

But how often is nature in the believer stronger than grace! Do not Christians sometimes pass a whole day with hardly a single devout aspiration?

Let me mention particular *seasons* which seem peculiarly to call for the exercise of this habit of prayer. What Christian can pass along the streets of a great city, and see vanity and sin everywhere manifested, and hear, almost on every side, oaths and curses, without praying for those whom he thus sees sunk in sin! What miserable objects continually pain his heart! And though in many cases his judgment may forbid him to give any thing to those who would only squander his bounty away, his piety will yet incline him in secret to pray for them, while thus obliged to withhold his alms. It was an excellent practice of a pious minister, never to hear an oath from any one, without prayiug to God for the offending individual; and, if compelled by his judgment not to relieve a beggar in the street, still to lift up his heart in secret prayer for a blessing on his soul.

In conversing with others on religious subjects, in going to the poor and afflicted, in waiting for others, in going from one place to another, in visiting your own friends, in coming to the house of God, in hearing his word, in these, and the various other circumstances of our lives, the heart of the devout Christian will be sending upwards many a secret petition; he will be silently wrestling with God, and gaining that divine blessing on all in which he is engaged, which others lose by carelessness and indifference.

This is the old religion; this is "the good way;" these are "the old paths."* Thus Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and David walked with God; and those who "walk" thus now, "find rest to their souls." In inviting the reader to this constant intercourse with God, we are inviting him to the highest privilege—friendship with his Creator; and to his richest enjoyment—delighting himself in communion with his Lord.

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* Jer. vi. 16.

Do you ask how you are to obtain, and how you are to keep alive this spirit of prayer? You must seek it; you must cultivate it. The grace of God is sufficient.

And first, *men need a new relationship to God.* Being by nature born in sin, and afar off from God, we must first be reconciled to him by Jesus Christ. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"* Lay hold, then, by faith, of the great salvation provided in Christ for guilty sinners; see its fullness, its freeness; accept the offered mercy; and then, "being justified by faith," you will "have peace with God." One, when unacquainted with real religion, was much perplexed as to the meaning of the expression, so often occurring in the Scripture, of "walking with God." But, having at length embraced free salvation by a crucified Savior, his heart was continually ascending in devout aspirations, especially in his walks; and then he said, "Now I know what it is to walk with God."

And they also need *the continual aid of the Holy Ghost.* Outward devotion may be practised by the natural man. The Mahomedans are perpetually counting their beads, and saying many prayers with their lips; a work of mere self-righteousness, or proceeding from ignorance, pride, or superstition. The Roman Catholics are not without similar superstitious practices. And many Protestants have "a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof." When the Holy Ghost is given, then, and then only, we shall belong to that company, of which the Apostle says, "we are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."† The Holy Spirit alone can enable us to pray spiritually and constantly.

Thus reconciled to God by Christ, thus aided by his Spirit, you have the first principles of this habit of prayer which must be cultivated by continual watchfulness, determined resolution, and patient perseverance.

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* Amos iii. 3. † Phil. iii 3.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER FOR THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

AMID all that sin and sorrow which the Christian sees in the world, observes in his family, or feels in his own heart, there is one bright prospect on which his eye can dwell with unmingled satisfaction, in the anticipation of which his heart can exult with unbounded joy; the promised time when truth, and righteousness, and peace shall universally prevail. That such a time will come, a simple-minded and humble reader of the Scriptures can have no doubt. Such passages as the following plainly point out an extension of the Gospel which has never yet taken place.

"All the ends of the earth shall remember, and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee."* "All kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him."† "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, and shall glorify thy name."‡ "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."§ "Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved."‖ "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever."¶

Observe the fullness of each of these expressions. Surely they foretell the universal spread of Christianity. To deny this, would, as Edwards has observed, be in effect to say, that it would have been impossible for God, if he had desired it, plainly to have foretold any thing that should absolutely have extended to all the nations of the earth. To suppose that these are merely high-wrought figures, and that events answerable to them are not likely to take place, is little short of supposing an intention to mislead others.

We may, then, rejoice in the delightful prospect which

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* Ps. xxii. 27.
† Ps. lxxxvi. 9.
‡ Ps. lxxii. 11.
§ Isa. xi. 9.
‖ Rom. xi. 25, 26.
¶ Rev. xi. 15.

the Bible thus opens before us. But these promises involve a duty, as well as convey a cheering prospect; the duty of exerting ourselves to promote the coming of this kingdom. Among other means of doing so, the duty of prayer is of the first importance. The subject is so little noticed in general, and yet forms so large a part of that prayer which our Lord teaches his disciples daily to use, that, though it has already been in some measure anticipated, when stating the subject of Intercession in the chapter on Private Prayer, it justly calls for distinct consideration.

While it is clear from various promises, that the kingdom of Christ shall universally prevail, it is no less manifest that there are *difficulties which only a Divine Power can overcome.*

There are many opposing powers of a nature that no arm of flesh can subdue. Man may contend with man, with some hope of success; but in contending "with principalities and powers, with the rulers of the darkness of this world, and with spiritual wickedness in high places," we want divine aid. We must pray with the prophet, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord." How can Satan be dethroned from his palace, the heart of man, "till a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him?"

All men's natural inclinations and corrupt opinions also oppose the reception of the Gospel. Nothing is more absurd to him who knows not the Bible, and the power of God, than to imagine that the blinded Hindoo enchained in his caste; the acute and licentious Mahomedan, reverencing his false prophet; the savage and degraded African, and the barbarous New Zealander, should give up their various notions, and embrace the pure, holy, and humbling truths of the gospel of Christ. The means also by which this change is to be effected appear to man utterly inefficient. The preaching of the cross of Christ is still "unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness;" and it is evident, to make these means effectual, we must look for "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." No arm of flesh can help us here: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

Many of the great promises of Scripture relative to that happy period of which we have been speaking, seem to *call for the spirit of prayer.*

Observe the determination of the Savior and his Church —"For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory:"* and then notice how this determined zeal in seeking to promote the light and glory of the Church is approved and required; "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."†

The intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ in heaven, is much on this subject. It is one part of his prayer, "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."‡ And he so earnestly desires the salvation of man, that it is called "the travail of his soul." In the second Psalm, the Father is described as addressing the Son thus: "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."§ Doubtless the Son has fulfilled this, as he has fulfilled every other part of his blessed office as an intercessor. Hence we have more encouragement from his intercession to pray for the conversion of the heathen, than for almost any other object. We are sure that the Son of God intercedes for us in this particular thing, and offers up our prayers. And as our Lord thus intercedes himself for the enlargement of his kingdom, so his word is full of directions and examples to encourage us to do the same.

Observe the directions to pray.—Our Lord seeing the harvest to be great, and the laborers few, instructed his disciples to use this means of obtaining them;—"Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into the harvest."‖ One half of the prayer which he has taught us daily to use, relates to this: "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." Doubtless when "all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him,"¶ those petitions in the Lord's prayer, with its simple, but sublime and magnificent conclusion, "Thine is the kingdom, and

* Isa. lxii. 1, 2. † Isa. lxii. 6, 7. ‡ John xvii. 21.
§ Ps. ii. 8. ‖ Matt. ix. 38. ¶ Ps. xxii. 27

the power, and the glory, for ever and ever," will receive a more manifest accomplishment than ever they have yet done. We are told in Isa. xlv. 11, "Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask of me things to come, concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me." St. Paul thus earnestly presses this duty: "I exhort, therefore, that first of all," (as a matter of chief importance,) "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men:" and he afterwards adds, "for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God, our Savior, who will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth:"* and again he says, "Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, as it is with you."

Observe the *prophecies respecting this spirit of prayer.* "It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: and the inhabitants of one city shall go unto another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts. I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of Hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord."†

We have also *examples* to encourage us thus to pray. David prays, "Have respect unto the covenant, for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty."‡ "Peace be within thy walls, and plenteousness within thy palaces."§ Esther, when the peculiar people of God were on the point of destruction, sends to all the Jews to fast and pray with her and her maidens, and their united prayers are heard. Daniel's prayer for the Church, when in captivity, is well worthy of imitation. Dan. ix. 2. 16, 17. It is probable, that on the very evening of the day on which our Lord directed his disciples to pray for more laborers, he himself went into a mountain and continued all night in prayer to God; and after thus praying all night, on the following morning he chose his twelve Apostles; Matt. ix. 36—38; x. 1—5; compared with Luke vi. 12—16. The Apostles, after his ascension, "all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication:" and at length on

* 1 Tim. ii. 1—4.

† Zech. viii. 20—22.

‡ Ps. lxxiv 20.

§ Ps. cxxii. 7.

the day of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost was given. "The Lord gave the word, and great was the company of those that published it."* The Church of Antioch "fasted and prayed," and then sent forth Barnabas and Saul on that great mission to the Gentiles, the benefits of which ultimately reached even to England. Acts xiii. 3.

And to come to more modern times. We find that holy men have ever, as they have more advanced in religion, felt more for the perishing state of mankind. Baxter thus expresses himself in some reflections at the close of his life: "My soul is much more afflicted with the thoughts of this miserable world, and more drawn out in a desire for its conversion than heretofore. I was wont to look little further than England in my prayers; but now I better understand the case of mankind and the method of the Lord's prayer. No part of my prayer is so deeply serious, as that for the conversion of the infidel and ungodly world." It is worth while reading the life of the Missionary Brainerd† only to observe the constant ardor of his soul, in praying for the coming of Christ's kingdom.

A blessing has ever attended this mode of seeking the welfare of the Church. "The cry of Israel in Egypt came up unto God by reason of their bondage; and God heard their groanings," and he sent them a deliverer. Daniel's prayer, (ch. ix.) was attended with an immediate answer. Who would have supposed that in the state in which Judea and the world were, when our Lord was crucified, that in so short a time such preachers should be raised up from the self-righteous or worldly Jews, or the benighted Gentiles, as should carry the Gospel into all the known nations of the earth, and almost convert the world. They prayed, and great was found to be the efficacy of prayer. In fact, every period of the revival of religion has been distinguished by the previous spirit of prayer. All the great Societies that have been raised in present times, and that fill and adorn our country, have been raised in prayer; and the way to obtain for them that full benefit to mankind, of which, under the blessing of God, they seem capable, is, for those who support them to give them also their continual prayers. St. Paul urges a striking reason why Christians

* Ps. lxviii. 11.

† See also the Life of Henry Martyn

should thus pray:* "Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf;" that thus, as he expresses it elsewhere, "the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God."†

The importance of this will be more seen, when it is remembered, that *the enlargement and building up of the spiritual church is entirely the work of God.* Who can accomplish all the promises on this subject? Who can influence the minds of Christians in general to promote their fulfilment? Who can raise up, and prepare, and duly qualify the laborers? Who can open their way before them, and prosper their undertakings? Who can give the heathen eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to feel? And when the seed is sown in their hearts, who must give the increase? In short, through whose power and mercy must "all flesh see the salvation of God?" We need not answer the question. It must be evident how greatly, in any design to promote the kingdom of Christ, the fervent, general, continued, united, and persevering prayers of all the Church of God are needed in every step of our way. The effect to be produced manifests the necessity of a divine power. It is not a mere instruction in a particular system; it is not a mere change of sentiment; but an entire change of heart and life; the fulfilling of that promise, "I will create in you a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within you." Like the work of creation, it requires the hand of God. As it is only His power that makes the seed sown in the earth to shoot and spring up; so here, "neither is he that planteth any thing, neither is he that watereth: but God that giveth the increase." And the fervency and ardor of prayer is here specially called for. Is it not a proof that the prayer, "thy kingdom come," has been coldly uttered, when we look abroad and see the present state of the kingdom of Christ? May we not well suppose that it would have been very different had every Christian that used the prayer, fervently offered up therewith the desire of his heart unto God?

It pleases the Almighty generally to work through prayer, as it is *prayer* that *gives God*, who is jealous of his

* 2 Cor. i. 11. † 2 Cor. iv 15.

honor, *all the glory*. When blessings come in answer to prayer, the praise is more generally ascribed to him to whom alone all praise belongs. The time is hastening on, when one vast song shall fill the earth "from sea to sea, and from the rivers unto the ends of the earth;" when shall be heard, "as it were the voice of mighty thunderings: saying, Allelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth; let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him." And doubtless, when, through the prayers of many, this happy period arrives, the burden of the song will be, "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous works; and blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory, Amen, and amen."

May the reader lay these things to heart, and remember how small a sacrifice the thing desired calls for. You are not here asked to give your silver and gold, or your life, though these all belong to your Savior; but the duty now pointed out is simply that of remembering a perishing world in your prayers: and in constantly and faithfully discharging it, you are obeying the two great commands of—love to God, and love to man. Never, then, think a prayer to be at all complete, which does not include the Heathen world. Never be satisfied with a prayer, either in your closet, in your family, in your walks, with your relatives and friends, or in the house of God, in which you have not asked of God something relating to his ways being "known on earth," his "saving health among all nations." Pray for all the societies engaged in this work, either at home or abroad; for all the Missionaries sent forth among the heathen, and all preparing to go; and for all who conduct or support Missionary efforts. As a real Christian, you will be an immense gainer by the enlargement of the kingdom of Christ, and the increase of the communion of saints.

And as this is the duty of individuals, so there seems a special efficacy in *united prayer*. Much that has been said on social, family, and public worship, applies here. Let Christian assemblies, in every part of our land, come frequently together to pray for the coming of Christ's kingdom; and it would be one of the happiest signs of its approach.

Let love to your Savior, benevolence towards man, your

own interest in this promised and happy era, the remarkable signs of the times, and your plain and positive duty, all combine, and influence and excite you really and often to pray, "thy kingdom come."

CHAPTER XI.

ON DISTRACTIONS IN PRAYER.*

When the sun is above the horizon, all the stars which appear so plainly, and in such number, during the night, are no longer visible; and though they are really still in the heavens, they are lost in the sun's brightness. This may illustrate a difference often observable between the Christian's striving to serve God in all things, and a worldly man who is living in habitual sin. The Christian condemns himself for unnumbered faults. He sees defects more numerous than the stars of heaven, in every part of his conduct. Even his prayers appear full of sins; he discovers in them innumerable wanderings of heart, and perpetual distractions; for there is no great sin in his life, in the blaze of which all these daily infirmities are lost, as the stars are lost in the more dazzling light of the sun. But the man of the world, whose heart is unchanged and unrenewed, thinks that he performs a meritorious service in the outward worship of God, and is not troubled, though he never feels one holy inclination. Did he but watch his heart, and know its true state, he would have to say, "I was almost in all evil, in the midst of the congregation and assembly."†

There are, indeed, many defects in our prayers; there is often great coldness in our desires, much unbelief in God's promises, improper ends in our petitions; but one principal sin in all our devotion is, the wandering of the heart.

It being of main importance to the right performance of prayer, "to attend upon the Lord without distraction," a fuller consideration of this subject may be useful. Distrac-

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* See Steele's "Antidote against Distractions in Prayer," from whom the Author has borrowed several ideas.

† Prov. v. 14.

tions will not, indeed, be entirely cured in this life: but as a man who knows not how to swim, may gradually learn that art, so as to keep himself by degrees longer and longer above water; so here improvements may be continually made. It is possible to be more and more freed from distractions, and more and more to rise above those troublous waves.

Observe *the nature of distraction.* It is the wandering of the heart from God. Some indeed manifest this in public worship by the wandering of the eye, the irreverence of their outward behavior, unnecessary whispering, and salutations; but I would rather dwell on the root of the evil—the wandering of the heart. In the midst of a solemn prayer, the heart will be dwelling on an earthly business, or pursuing a vain pleasure. It will be engaged in thoughts of doing good on a subject foreign to the prayer then offering up with the lips, or be led aside to circumstances relating to the subject of our prayer.*

There is a contest often carrying on in the Christian's breast, during worship, of which the mere formalist is wholly ignorant. His end is gained, his conscience is satisfied, if he has appeared in the house of God, or if he has repeated his prayers—he thinks this a meritorious service, and is well pleased with himself. Not so the watchful Christian. It is his continual internal struggle to worship God in spirit and in truth. He knows the task of raising an earthly mind to heavenly things. He strives not only against worldly thoughts, but also against good thoughts which often come thus unseasonably to hinder him in attending to the present duty. In carrying on this contest, he finds the power of a carnal mind continually sinking him to the dust. He repels idle and wandering thoughts, he labors against inattention, and, perhaps, after all, he has gained but a transient moment of devotion, and he returns

* A converted female among the liberated Negroes in Sierra Leone describes this very expressively.—She said, "Wicked thing trouble me much; me want to do good, but my wicked heart will no let me. My heart run away all this week; run all about." When asked what she meant by her heart running all about, she replied, "Suppose me pray, my heart run to my country; to Sierra Leone; all about; and then me can't say no more but Jesus Christ have mercy on me, poor thing! O my bad heart. Me tink sometimes me have two hearts; one want to do good, but the other always want to do bad. O Jesus, have mercy on me, poor sinner!"

humbled, abased, and depressed, smiting his breast, and saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Nothing humbles him more than the defects of his prayers.

It is well when we are deeply affected by this wandering of the heart, and mourn on account of it. But if the writer may judge from his own experience, how often do we insult and dishonor God by a slight and perfunctory service, and yet retire from worship with little brokenness of heart, and little contrition! How would such conduct towards an earthly superior, when reflected on in sober moments, overwhelm our minds with shame and confusion of face!

To some, almost the whole of their prayers is, at times, little else but one continued distraction; they have not a single holy thought really offered up to God in any part of the service; and, alas! if the thoughts of most Christians during their worship were expressed with their prayers, what strange petitions would be found to be offered up to God! An old writer justly observes, "thinking is the mind's speaking, and the Heart-searcher can, and does more easily take notice when the mind thinks impertinently, than we can observe when the tongue speaks so." There are but few that make a real business of prayer.

There is *great evil in these distractions.* The more wandering the heart is, the more wearisome the duty; while the nearer we come to God, the more warmth, and life, and comfort we enjoy. The work of prayer not only ceases while our hearts wander, but distracted "confessions" increase guilt; distracted "petitions" only ask for a denial; and distracted "praises" tend to stop the current of mercy. We make light of distractions on account of their commonness; but God greatly condemns them. A curse is pronounced on those who do "the work of the Lord deceitfully"* or negligently. God declares, "I know the things that come into your heart, every one of them."† Sins in public worship must be peculiarly offensive to the holy God. Solomon says, with marked emphasis, "I saw the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there."‡

It is an awful character described by David, "There is no faithfulness in their mouth, their inward part is very wickedness, their throat is an open sepulchre, they flatter

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* Jer. xlviii. 10. † Ezek. xi. 5. ‡ Eccles. iii. 16

with their tongue."* Observe, too, how this sin agrees to Ezekiel's description: "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people—for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after covetousness."†

God has ever shown himself to be jealous respecting those things which concern his immediate worship. Thus we find Nadab and Abihu punished with death for offering strange fire before the Lord. Lev. x. 1, 2. We read that Uzziah was smitten with death for touching the Ark of God. 2 Sam. vi. 6. The directions respecting his worship under the Mosaic dispensation were very minute and particular, which, among other things, may teach us the need of great attention in our approaches to God, and the regard which God pays to all our worship. Indeed, as one observes, "it is evidently a gross insult to the glorious God, when praying to him, to quit him in the midst of our prayers, as if we were conversing with an inferior, and to make vain excursions on every side."

Another thing which should teach us the sinfulness of distraction is, they bear the stamp of *hypocrisy*. It was the reproach of the ancient Church, "Ephraim compasseth me about with lies."‡ Is not this a true description of much of the worship of Christians? You would not like that any fellow Christian should know what was passing in your heart during your prayers; but is it not a small matter to be judged of man's judgment? "He that judgeth me is the Lord."

Alas! when we look back on the distractions of our prayers (and the writer continually and deeply feels in his own prayers the prevalence of that evil which he has been describing,) have we not reason to fear that few ever really pray? are we not compelled to acknowledge, how seldom they that pray oftenest, do pray; and what short prayers the best make, many words, perhaps, and but very little prayer? These things should lead us more to value the doctrines of free justification through the blood of Christ; more deeply to prize, and more earnestly to ask for the aid of the Holy Spirit; more to depend on the Savior's intercession; and more to long to be in that blessed kingdom

* Ps. v. 9 † Ezek xxxiii. 31. ‡ Hosea xi. 12, &c.

where we shall serve our God without weariness or wandering.

Some hints that may, by the help of God, *assist you to avoid distractions*, will now be mentioned.

There may be an infirmity arising from the state of bodily health, or constitution, and the like, of which timid and anxious Christians, who are most apt to be troubled by their wanderings of prayer, should not lose sight in judging of themselves. Preston observes, "one may aim at a mark and do his best, and yet be hindered either by the palsy in his arm, or by one who jogs him when about it." But the general *cause* of our distractions is the power of Satan, and the remaining strength of corrupt nature. Though the Christian is born again of God, he has two contending parties within—"the old man," and "the new man;" and distractions mainly arise from the weakness of grace, the strength of sin, the temptations of Satan.

Remember, first of all, *your entire dependence on God.* Know your own weakness. "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves;" but while you see this, know your Savior's strength, that his "grace is sufficient for you;" and these things being duly impressed on your mind, in his strength seek to overcome this evil. For further directions, as to the assistance which you may have from God, I refer you to the chapter on the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

Send up fervent petitions for Divine assistance, especially when you first find that your heart is wandering.* This is an effectual help. It engages the power of God against the power of Satan and sin. The Psalms are full of suitable expressions that may be used with advantage. "My soul cleaveth to the dust, quicken thou me according to thy word. Create in me a clean heart, O God, renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." Thus contend against your spiritual enemies, and you must overcome them.

Determine to strive against wanderings. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."† Are you not in general

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* "Cry unto God, 'Lord, wilt thou suffer thy slave to abuse thy child, before thy face, while he is on his knees for a blessing?'"
Harrison.

† James iv. 7.

going carelessly to the worship of God, as a matter of habit and custom, without much thought of engaging your heart to approach unto him? This seems to be a too general case from the inquiry, "Who is this that hath engaged his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord?"* The heart must be engaged to serve God. We should resolve with Jeremiah, "Let us lift up our hearts with our hands, unto God in the heavens."† Before you enter on this holy duty, pause, and pray with David, "Unite my heart to fear thy name;"‡ as if he had said, "I find my heart divided, and my thoughts dissipated; gather in all my wandering affections; may they be fixed on *one* great object; may they all be united in this single act that is before me:"

> "That all my powers, with all their might,
> "In thy sole glory may unite."
>
> *Kenn.*

Seek to gain a spiritual mind. "To be spiritually-minded is life and peace." We are only cutting off a leaf or a twig from this evil tree, while we take away a particular distraction. "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved! How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?"§ Till the heart be washed from sin, by the blood of Jesus, and by the grace of his Spirit, vain thoughts will be sure to lodge, or take up an abode in you, and to mingle with all you do. The heavenly-minded Christian, whose heart is continually with God, finds it comparatively easy to keep it more closely fixed on him, in the particular act of prayer. But if you are under the full influence of the carnal mind, it is utterly impossible that you can offer spiritual worship. "You must be born again."‖ Such want an entire new heart. When they gain that, they may the better hope to attend upon the Lord without distraction. "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long," and then there will not be the difficulty which you find in fixing your thoughts, and staying your mind on God, during the act of prayer.¶

Men of the world are not distracted about their worldly business, but will pursue it with all fixedness and inten-

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* Jer. xxx. 21. † Lam. iii. 41. ‡ Ps. lxxxvi. 11.
§ Jer. iv. 14. ‖ John iii. 7.
¶ See Owen's Grace and Duty of being spiritually-minded.

tion of mind, hour after hour, day after day, and year after year. They have an earthly mind, and love earthly things. Seek you to have a spiritual mind, and then you will thus pursue spiritual things. All the lines of your affection should unite here; all the radii of the circle should meet in this centre—in a fixedness of heart of God in his worship.

"The circumstances of our prayers often lead our minds from God. We have to think of our sins, and their circumstances, when we confess them, and of our wants when we pray for what we need, and of our mercies when we thank God for them, and of our friends when we intercede for them; but if the mind were in a spiritual state, these things would rather be the means of drawing our hearts nearer to God, than of drawing them from him. Our thoughts should not so run out on the particulars of worship, as to forget the presence of Him whom we worship.

Persevere in prayer, notwithstanding distractions. In the path of duty, every obstacle gives way to the faith of the Christian. When the Israelites were come to the Red Sea, and to the waters of Jordan, they were directed to go forward. It might have been objected, If we go forward, shall we not be drowned? But still their duty was to go forward; and so shall we go in the path of a plain command, leaving to our God the removal of all obstacles. The reluctance and the discouragement of prayer will be overcome in the performance of the duty. When their heart is in this distracted frame, in private prayer, by giving more time to the duty, and dwelling on the petitions till you are able to attend to what you say, you will often be enabled to overcome your difficulties. "Patience is a grace as necessary sometimes in devotion, as in afflictions; and the want of patience does as often make our devotions defective as the want of recollection."

The difficulty of praying without distraction, and the fact that distractions do mingle with our holiest services, should inculcate many practical *lessons;* such as humility, brokenness of spirit, and, as has been already noticed, entire dependence on Christ for righteousness and strength, breathings after the influence of the Spirit, and a longing to be in heaven, where all our services will be pure and holy. That prayer is not lost which produces any of these

effects. Nay, if a distracted prayer do but deeply humble us, it may be one of our most profitable prayers.

And when our distractions are lamented, and our desire after spiritual blessings unfeigned, it may encourage us to remember that we pray to a Father. A little child often finds a difficulty in expressing its wants to an earthly father; yet he, being desirous to meet the wishes of the child, will be ingenious, and patient, to discover and supply those wishes: so shall our "heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him."

Our incapacity, indeed, is not physical, but moral; yet God, notwithstanding these many sins, considers those who trust in his Son as children, and pities them, and spares them, "as a man spareth his son."

CHAPTER XII.

On Devotional Feelings merely.

There are a number of persons whom we have no reason to believe to be under the influence of real religion; their tempers are frequently unsubdued and irritable; their affections, in the main, are worldly; and their pride of heart is evident; that yet express themselves in a devout way, and talk as if they found pleasure in devotion. The beauties of creation, the charms of nature, the fancied pictures which they draw of the goodness of the Deity, fill their minds with lively ideas of the benevolence of the Creator. They love to contemplate these things, and to converse about them in a strain of devout admiration and praise. Deists and idolaters sometimes express themselves in this way; and Socinians often talk as if their view of religion encouraged real devotion.

What then are the great defects of the kind of devotion which has been described? It is accompanied by some one or other of the following marks.

With respect to those who profess to have it, it has little or no bearing on the temper, which still remains unsanctified, either self-indulgent or fretful, and exposed to bursts of passion. It puffs up, and fosters pride of heart, and fills

the mind with self-conceit, and self-sufficiency. It leads men to court rather than shun the admiration of others; or, it is often a mere indulgence of natural imagination, of a pensive disposition, of taste, and the like. Pleasurable sensations are excited by the idea of the dignity of such contemplations, and it is supposed that they indicate a superior state of mind to the common class of persons: and this pleases and satisfies the carnal mind.

With respect to God, it has no regard to his holiness or justice; it overlooks the Scripture account of his character, and those sorrows and evils of life which visibly mark his hand and the sinfulness of man. It greatly, if not totally, disregards the only mediator by whom we may draw near to God. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Him."

And with respect to others, there is little or no separation from vain and sinful company, from worldly habits, practices, and maxims; no fulfilling of the precept, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing;" and therefore no obtaining of the promise, "and I will receive you, and I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

In the feelings to which we allude, there is no real communion with God: that is ever humbling and purifying. Men of the description which has been mentioned, know nothing of the character of God as "the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy;" who says, "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

This deceptive appearance of devotion sometimes arises from a spurious sentimentality; from notions not founded on the word of God, but on human fictions and vain reasonings, or foolish imaginations, assuming the character without the scriptural reality of religion. Sometimes men of real devotion, (like Law in his Spirit of Prayer,) have gone off into that which is mystical and unintelligible. Let us in all things adhere to the written word. This sort of devotion is not that plain, simple, home, and every-day life religion which so eminently marks the discourses of our Savior, and of his Apostles. It has its seat more in the imagination of a recluse, than in a broken spirit, enlight-

ened and humbled by Divine Truth, and, under the teaching of the Spirit, brought to a real knowledge of the excellence and glory of the Divine Being, of our great corruption, our inestimably precious Redeemer, our entire dependence on His grace, and a filial confidence in a reconciled Father.

At other times such feelings may arise from mere animal sympathy. In a social meeting, or in a congregation, both he who offers up the prayers, and they who join, will be deeply affected and moved by the solemnity of the place, by the number assembled, by the manifestation of their feelings, or by the sacred music which they may hear; these things naturally have, and ought to have, an impressive effect, on every mind; we do not object to this effect, but to the mind's resting satisfied with it, as the sum of devotion. It is possible that the whole effect of such a service may be the mere excitement of the animal frame, apart from all those really devotional principles which come from above; a mere impression on the senses, quite distinct from communion with God himself, and all that holy state of mind which God alone bestows and regards.

That corrupt church which in its devotional exercises, in direct contradiction to the plain testimony of Scripture,* uses a language not understood by the common people, cultivates much among its adherents, by show, pomp, music, and outward solemnity, this mere impression on the mind and senses of the worshippers. You may also behold among them, persons with the greatest appearance of devotion, satisfying their conscience by numerous repetitions of prayers counted by beads. Our Lord decidedly condemns all such worship.†

There are those also in the Protestant churches, whose whole aim seems to be, merely to be deeply affected, while in prayer, and who consider that the being much impressed and excited, is the highest degree of devotion.

Let the reader, then, be on his guard, and not suppose that every thing of a contemplative, or sensitive, or exciting nature, with a devotional cast, is real devotion and acceptable to God.

Yet there is a true devotional feeling, essential to our well-being and happiness, of the greatest value and im-

* 1 Cor. xiv. † Matt. vi. 7, and xv. 7—9.

portance, and producing the most blessed effects, a devotion which humbles and yet raises, which softens asperities of temper, and yet makes the self-indulgent self-denying and firm; which changes the worldly into the heavenly mind; which heightens every enjoyment, mitigates every trial and suffering, gives peace within, and spreads cheerfulness and happiness without. St. John describes it, when he says, "truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." The former part of this treatise will have shown the reader the nature of this devotion, and the following directions are added to assist him in attaining it.

CHAPTER XIII.

DIRECTIONS TO ASSIST IN ATTAINING THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER.

THE duty and privilege of the various kinds of prayer have now been brought before the reader. They should all be attended to; they are each beautiful, and needful in their season. A Christian will not attend public and neglect family worship; he will not pray in his family, and neglect his secret devotions; he will not pray statedly in secret, and neglect social or habitual prayer. Each will come regularly in its fit place and time, without interfering with the other; each not hindering, but succeeding, and mutually helping the other. Nor will he count all this course of prayer burdensome and wearisome. To enjoy the presence of God is his happiness, and therefore he longs to live in the continual practice of prayer. Your views of devotional exercise as a task or privilege, are a test by which you may judge of your progress in religion, if not of its reality.

And while there will, in the advanced Christian, be a constant attention to all these kinds of prayer, he will especially attend to the spirit in which each is performed. It will not be sufficient to satisfy his mind that he has gone through the mere act of devotion; he labors for the inward feeling as well as the outward expression. He longs for

the spirit of prayer, which is not the mere business of this or that hour, but the continual panting and breathing of the heart after God,* at all times.

Ardent love to God is, indeed, the true spring of genuine prayer. Where this is, all other graces will follow "Love," says one, "renders prayer delightful to ourselves, and acceptable to our Maker. It makes us willing to ask, and willing to receive."

Andrew Gray also observes, "The spirit of prayer consists more in the voice of the affections, than the voice of words." He suggests the following queries to detect the want of the spirit of prayer—Do you know what it is to go to prayer on an internal principle of love, and the grace of Christ constraining you?—Do you know what it is by prayer to attain greater conformity to God, and the mortification of your lusts? Do you know what it is to distinguish between absence and presence? Do you know what it is to sit down and lament over absence from Christ, and think this an insupportable want?

I have endeavored, under each kind of prayer, to give such hints as might assist you in attaining this spiritual worship; it may not be useless to sum up these hints in a few practical rules applicable to prayer in general. Only let the reader again remember, what we are apt perpetually to forget, but what should both humble, direct, and comfort us, that no knowledge of rules is of itself sufficient to enable us to pray; it is the Holy Spirit alone impressing the rule on the heart, that can enable us rightly to worship God.

"To maintain a devotional spirit, two things," says Mrs. More, "are especially necessary: habitually to cultivate the disposition, and habitually to avoid whatever is unfavorable to it." We will first point out some things which hinder your attaining the spirit of devotion, and then add some directions which may help you to attain it.

Sect. I.—*Rules relating to Hindrances to Prayer.*

1. *Renounce all known sin and sensual indulgence.*—The allowed practice of any sin is utterly inconsistent with devotional feelings. If you live in habitual sin, or in the indulgence of evil tempers, or if any "corrupt commu-

* Ps. xlii 1, 2.

nication proceed out of your mouth," you cannot at the same time enjoy communion with God. 1 John i. 6; iii. 21—23. His Spirit is grieved, and withdraws its influence. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart."* Any sin indulged, raises those fears, doubts, disorders, and tumults in the mind, which make it averse to, and incapable of, fervent affectionate prayer. An instance or two may confirm this remark. St. Paul exhorts us to "pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath or doubting." I am sure, if you have any Christian experience, you know that it is necessary, that "all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice," if you would gain the spirit of prayer. An unforgiving temper, also, not only hinders the spirit of devotion, but also prevents the acceptance of your petitions. Our Lord says, "Go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."† Bishop Taylor, in a beautiful figure, shows the evil effects of anger as an impediment to devotion. "Anger is a perfect alienation of the mind from prayer, directly contrary to that disposition which makes our prayers acceptable to God. Thus the lark, rising from his bed of grass, soars upward, singing as he rises, but the poor bird is beaten back by the sudden blast of an eastern wind, and his motion made irregular and inconstant, descending more at every breath of the tempest, than it can recover by the libration of its wings, till the little creature is forced to sit down, and pant, and stay till the storm is over, and then it makes a more prosperous flight, and rises still, and sings, as if it had learned music and motion from an angel." Again; immoderate, or unnecessary indulgence of ease, appetite, sleep, &c. are serious obstacles to the attaining a devotional spirit. The man of self-denial will, like Daniel, (ch. i. 12.) be the man of prayer. Chap. vi. 10. "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life," is a solemn admonition of the Lord before he gave the charge, "Watch ye, therefore, and pray always." Our sins are one great reason why our prayers are not oftener heard. "When you spread forth your hands, I

Ps. xxiv. 3, 4. O 2 † Matt. v. 24.

will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers I will not hear; your hands are full of blood." Remember St. John's remark: "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God; and whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." See farther passages—Ps. iv. 3; xxvi. 6; xxxiv. 15, 17 Prov. viii. 32; James v. 16; John ix. 31. Yet remember, the meaning of these passages is not that we must not pray if we have committed actual sin; for then none would pray; but that we are not to go to our prayers with the love of sin, or with a purpose to go on sinning still. See page 25.*

2. *Be not conformed to the world.*—We hope that the happy day is coming on when "all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him;" but, at present, who can go much into the world, unless his duties call him there, without suffering from it? For a Christian to enter into worldly company and join in vain amusements, is, as if a man were to put a burning torch into water: the flame of devotion will be, must be, extinguished. Those who go into a large manufactory, filled with people and machines, find it difficult, when in the midst of such a scene, to converse with each other; but those who go much into the bustle of company, find it still more difficult to hold converse with God. It is only when compelled to be there in the way of duty, and not otherwise, that they may expect, that, as his special grace preserved Daniel in the spirit of prayer, even in Babylon, so it will preserve them. Being immoderately engaged in worldly business, is another hindrance, filling a man with the cares of this

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* Sir Matthew Hale, in his Treatise on the Knowledge of God, well remarks—"A frequent, solemn, and serious use of the duty of prayer, interrupts a custom of sin, by degrees weakens the old man, and will in time make a strangeness between our lusts and our souls. And let a man be sure of these *two truths:* that as he that comes upon his knees with a secret purpose to hold confederacy with any sin, he shall be the worse, the more hardened, and the more neglected by that God which searches the heart; so whosoever he be that comes to his Maker in the integrity of his heart, though sin adheres as close to that heart of his, as his skin does to his flesh, shall find that employment will make those lusts that were most dear to him, by degrees to become strange and loose to his soul."

life. He whose whole time is incessantly occupied in worldly affairs, finds his heart entirely distracted, and utterly unfitted for holy and retired duties. The Apostle says, "Be careful for nothing;" and then adds, "but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." O believe me, it is far better to have a small income, with a quiet conscience and a devout heart, than the largest income without God's blessing.

3. *Resist the temptations of Satan.*—There is a powerful spiritual adversary of man, "who goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Here is your great enemy. Other things are but his engines. His object in other things is to keep you from, or hinder you in prayer. "Be not ignorant of his devices." He will suggest that prayer is a dull and gloomy service, or useless and vain. If these do not succeed, he will suggest the putting off the duty to another opportunity, on account of some other employment: some favorite book to be read, some letter perhaps to be written, or some other business which he will propose to your mind, important perhaps in itself, but "not good for this time." Consider every thing which would tempt you to neglect prayer, in its appointed season, whether it be any of those objections which have been answered already, (see p. 22, &c.) or the fear of man's ridicule, or love of ease, or any other cause, as a mere temptation, and "resist the devil, and he will flee from you." This evil spirit will be "cast out by prayer and fasting."* Does he present to you various difficulties? Remember, that nothing excellent is obtained without effort and difficulty. Remember, men pursue human schemes of great difficulty, amidst every opposition; they go through the most arduous enterprises, without any certainty of success, or any promise of Divine help. In seeking communion with God, you are sure to succeed, and have his faithful promise that he will help you. Will you not be condemned by the conduct of men in general, respecting the things of this world, if difficulties should deter you from endeavoring to obtain a good which, as a Christian, you must acknowledge to be the greatest and most profitable that can be gained in the present life? Difficulties give

* Matt. xvii. 21.

way to real efforts. "Prayer is in its nature a kind of wrestling and striving for a victory, which presupposes an opposition." The opposition of Satan will be vanquished by a steady resistance in the strength of your Savior.

4. *Beware of a self-righteous spirit*, or any thing like fancying, because you have said your prayers, and especially, if you have prayed with more than ordinary freedom and affection, that therefore you deserve any thing from God, or are holy and righteous in his sight. Such a view of yourself, provokes God to withdraw his Spirit, and leaves you to your own natural barrenness and dryness. Nay, if you trust in your prayers, and put them in the place of your Savior, they will as much ruin your immortal soul, as the grossest sins. This is a very common temptation, of which we are all in danger. Even the excellent Milner describes himself as naturally always setting up for himself, always aiming at independence, and that it was with the utmost difficulty he was brought to feel what a poor, sinful creature he was by nature. This spirit of self-righteousness manifests itself in complacency and self-satisfaction when any thing right has been done, and in overwhelming despondency and depression after our sins. But we should learn to rejoice in Christ alone when most lively in the way of duty, and to trust in him alone when most low. Nothing is more natural to us, than, when we have been greatly assisted, and our heart softened, and our mind enlarged in prayer, to flatter ourselves, and trust in our performance. But as in the flood, neither the tallest tree, nor the highest mountain saved any of the ungodly world who were shut out of the ark, the only refuge; so Jesus Christ alone can save us. The directions of the pious Anselm to the sick man, are in point here. "See, then," he says to him, "while life remains in thee, that thou repose thy confidence only in the death of Christ,—trust in nothing else; commit thyself wholly to his death—cover thyself with this alone. And if the Lord will judge thee, say, 'Lord, I cast the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between myself and thy judgment, otherwise I will not engage in judgment with thee.' And if he shall say unto thee, 'Thou art a sinner!' say, 'I place the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and my sin.' And if he shall say, 'Thou hast deserved damnation!' say, 'Lord, I cast the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and my evil deserts,

and I offer his merits for that merit which I ought to have had, and have not." One good man said, "I am more afraid of my duties than of my sins, for my duties make me often proud, but my sins make me always humble." Though an expression of this kind may be somewhat unguarded, it may show us, in a striking way, a danger which many Christians hardly even suspect. O rest not, then, in any duties; put no confidence at all in them as grounds of salvation; "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ," and rest wholly on him. Let prayer be the way by which you gain an interest in him and his salvation, and not be a means of keeping you from a sole trust in him.

5. *Guard against improper motives and ends in your prayers.*—Sinful motives are apt perpetually to mingle with and defile all we do. Let not the procuring an esteem for sanctity, conscientiousness, and spirituality, for great parts or gifts, for readiness and copiousness of invention, memory, and judgment, be your motives to pray. One prayer is worth ten thousand fine thoughts. Let not your design be to show that you can pray much, and are well furnished with matter; nor yet to manifest that you are good church-goers, never miss prayers, and can pray with an acceptable or pleasing delivery of voice. Let not the vain-glory of praying long, and frequently, in every place, "as the hypocrites standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men,"* whom our Lord reproved, let not this be the end for which you pray. Rather pray, desiring thereby to be disposed and enabled to serve God and the world, to live profitably and comfortably, and to be prepared and made meet for an immortal and everlasting reward. And remember, that the glory of God should be the ultimate end at which you aim in all your prayers. Our design in asking any thing from God should be to render it again to him: and while we propose this to ourselves, we are the more likely to obtain our requests. It has been said, "Wicked and unthankful men are but like vapors and exhalations drawn up out of the earth, which do but eclipse the sun that raises them; so it is when God raises up these men by his bounty and goodness, who by their wickedness and ingratitude stain and

* Matt. vi. 5.

eclipse his glory in the world. Whereas godly men are like rivers, which, as they receive all their streams from the sea, so they return all again into the sea: so, whatever truly devout persons receive from God, they improve all for, and return all again unto him." And therefore they may well hope to speed, who beg mercies at the hand of God, that they may return all again to his glory.

6. *Take heed of spiritual pride.*—Let us remember "God hath respect to the lowly, but the proud he knoweth afar off."* One reason why we do not receive more help from God, may be this,—we could not have it without danger to our souls. It is justly observed, "When the heart is enlarged in prayer, and good expressions come with great fluency from the lips, how apt is he that prays to have high conceits of himself and of his performances! His mind is prone to wander, and think what others think of him, and is sinfully pleased in the imagination, that they are admiring him. Such thoughts as these—How well do I pray! How broken for sin do I appear! How fervent in spirit do I seem! What credit and applause shall I get by this performance! What an excellent saint shall I be accounted! Such thoughts are apt to hover about an enlarged heart: but if they are not kept out with an utter detestation of them, the heart will be distracted with pride, how heavenly soever are the expressions of the mouth."† Frequently contemplate the glorious perfections of Jehovah. Those who see and know most of him are most humbled before him. The more we see of his glory, the more we shall discover of our own insignificance. It is only in proportion as we are far from God that we are pleased with ourselves. We want more Christian simplicity and humility; a more entire sense of our own nothingness, of our emptiness of all good; and then we should neither fancy ourselves to be any thing, nor fancy that we are more devout than others. "If a man thinketh himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." A right knowledge of the true character of your best prayers, will rather lead you to the deepest humility, and will incline you to look more simply for the power of the Spirit, and to the intercession of Christ.

7. *Neglect not the holy Scriptures.* If you disregard the

* Ps. cxxxviii. 6. † Vincent on Distractions.

word of God when he speaks, you cannot expect that he should attend to you when you are speaking to him. Remember what is said; "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." Or again; "Because I have called and ye refused—ye have set at naught all my counsel—they shall call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."* Is not neglect of the Scriptures one great reason of the Christian's barrenness in devotion? The word of God is a rich mine of devotional feeling and expression. Become, then, more acquainted with it. They cannot be devout who are ignorant of the state of their own souls, and of the truths of the Bible. It is not want of ability to express ourselves, but want of feeling, that is the greatest difficulty to be overcome: and while you are unacquainted with those truths of the word of God, which would discover to you your own character and state: while you know not the perfections of God, his holy precepts, and his precious promises, and the prospects which his word sets before you respecting another state, how can you feel aright on these subjects? You necessarily want the great food of prayer. Those who have but poor abilities, have often been enabled, by knowledge of the Scriptures, most impressively to pray to God. Were our minds more imbued with the sacred truths of the Bible, we should never be in want of matter for confession, petition, intercession, and praise. All its prohibitions and threatenings would give you expressions of confession; all its precepts, of petition; and all its promises, of thanksgiving. A right knowledge of the Bible is one of the best helps of devotion. It would be well when you read that sacred book, to extract any passage affecting your mind for prayer. Study the Pslams of David in this view. The primitive Christians used to learn the whole book by heart, and thus have prayers ready for every occasion. Would not this be a profitable exercise for the young? And the Bible is not only useful as furnishing matter for your prayers, but when read in faith and humility, it is wonderfully calculated to excite devotional feelings, and to quicken our hearts in calling on God. All devout persons have, like David, loved the law of the Lord.†

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* Prov. i. 24—28.

† Gray, a writer who has already been quoted, speaks of the fol-

The hindrances which have been mentioned may perhaps solve that which has often been a difficulty in the minds of persons who have seen no good effect produced by the prayers of some professors. The duty of prayer may be discharged so erroneously and carelessly, with such a mixture of sin; and impure motives; men's affections may still be so engaged in the world, that there is little or no real desire of heart, little or no true prayer. When they arise from their knees, their petitions are quite forgotten: the occupations of the world come on; and if any good affections or desires have been excited, they are choked by the cares of this life. Hence we may see those, who neglect not stated seasons of prayer, and give much time to it, still yielding like others to bad tempers: and though probably some general good may arise from their prayers, yet there is little perceptible difference between them and those who pray not at all. This shows the necessity of praying in a right spirit, in order to gain the advantage promised to this great duty.

Sect. II.—*Rules to assist in attaining the Spirit of Devotion.*

1. *Look for the aid of the Holy Spirit.* Undoubtedly the great helper of the soul, in devotional exercise, is the Holy Ghost. Without his aid we cannot at all pray aright or acceptably to God. Be not content, then, unless you obtain this assistance. Be not content with a formal circle of duties, without the life, pleasure, and power of religion. You ought not to be satisfied without receiving the promises, and "praying in the Holy Ghost."* He helpeth the infirmities of Christ's people. He is the "Spirit of adoption," enabling them to cry, "Abba, Father;" and therefore if you are a true disciple of Christ, you ought to expect and obtain his help. Think that prayer very defective in which

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lowing impediments to prayer.—"Our low design. We pray in secret that we may be more fitted to pray abroad. We aim at honor to ourselves, not glory to God.—Our formality, or prayer without faith and love.—Our neglect of seeking the Spirit.—Our not employing Jesus as a mediator.—Our earthly, worldly minds.—Our resisting and grieving the Spirit in our ordinary walks.—Our pride of heart." The knowledge of these difficulties and impediments is one step towards overcoming them.

* Jude 20.

your mind is not sensible of the divine presence, in which your heavenly Father does not manifest his presence by imparting to you some feelings of sorrow for sin, some holy thirstings and longings after the grace and blessings of God, some ardent desires after holiness and conformity to his will; which feelings and desires are manifestly the fruit of his Spirit. Every man is more or less with his Lord in prayer, as he is more or less under the teachings of the Holy Spirit. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."* Through this divine influence hindrances are removed, and all those graces imparted, which are required in acceptable prayer. He takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to us, and leads us by him to the Father.† Ever remember, then, that the "preparation of the heart in man is from the Lord."‡ "'The Spirit of grace and supplication' is like a quickening spirit, entering into a dead body, that insinuates life and activity into all the parts, conveys a warmth into every limb, and gives a freshness and beauty to the whole; which, whatever other perfections it may have, is, without this, but a languid, cold, dead, or lifeless thing." Prayer, then, for the aid of the Holy Spirit, is the best preparation for prayer. Plead the promise, "Thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear."§ Urge the entreaty, "Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name."‖

2. *Trust only in the name of Jesus Christ.* To pray in the name of Christ, is rightly to view and depend on his intercession, his atonement, his purchase, and his strength. This is the only prevailing plea. Be persuaded of your own sinfulness and guilt. Mention none other name, but the name of Jesus; none other merits but the merits of Jesus, when you approach unto God. Have a constant eye to his intercession, saying with Jeremiah, "O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake."¶ The assurance that you have such a High Priest, should exceedingly encourage you in approaching to, in continuing at, and retiring from, the throne of grace. All your prayers are defective and defiled; but Jesus offering up even such prayers, (as was shown at large in the third

* 2 Cor. iii. 17.
† Eph. ii. 18.
‡ Prov. xvi. 1.
§ Ps. x. 17.
‖ Ps. lxxx. 18.
¶ Jer. xiv. 7. and Ps. xxv 11.

chapter,) through his intercession, they become effectual; while the most fervent prayer you ever made, if it fostered a self-righteous spirit, and was trusted in, instead of Christ, will only add to your guilt, and increase your condemnation. Regard his atonement. He has made peace by the blood of his cross; and "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." Here then is a sufficient ground of confidence in your approaches to God. Consider his purchase. All the blessings that you need, and for which you ask, were bought by his blood, and are laid up ready for you, to be received on asking. Heaven itself is a purchased possession.* Depend on his strength. Without Christ "you can do nothing;" but you may say, "I can do all through Christ strengthening me." You can only get near to God in and by Christ Jesus. Let this name of Christ encourage you to begin your prayer, notwithstanding all your sins; and quiet your mind after your prayer, notwithstanding all your defects. "Coming to the throne of grace in Christ's name," says Trail, "is another thing than men commonly take it to be. Some think it is only to say in their prayers, 'for Christ's sake.' To ask in His name is a higher business than to be reached by unbelievers, and men devoid of the Spirit of God. If "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost;"† "how shall men call on him in whom they have not believed?" But can you take the searcher of hearts to witness, that you build all your hopes of acceptance at the throne of grace in the name and mediation of Jesus? Can you say, I have no name to come to God in, but Christ's? since all that came in his name were welcome, I will come also: having no plea but Christ's name, no covering but his robe of righteousness—I will expect answers of peace and acceptance, only in that blessed beloved. As much as Christ is out of your minds in praying, so much are you out in praying, and your praying out of that it ought to be. That which we beg is out of Christ's store. In whose name do we beg it, but in his? for whose sake, but for his? Out of whose hands do we receive what we ask and get, but out of his? It is marvellous that people should pretend to prayer, and think they pray, who forget Jesus Christ, who is all in all, in all right prayer."

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* Eph.: 14. † 1 Cor xii. 3.

3. *Be watchful.* "Watch unto prayer." It is observable how frequently watchfulness and prayer are joined together by our Lord and his Apostles. Jesus Christ says, "Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape."* St. Paul says, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same,"† and St. Peter, after saying, "the end of all things is at hand," exhorts them, "Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."‡

You should watch *for favorable opportunities of prayer*. In some happy moments, when circumstances concur to call us to this duty, a more than ordinary divine influence seems to be granted to the Christian, disposing and inclining his heart to pray, and wonderfully assisting him with suitable thoughts and desires. There is a full breeze, as it were, of spiritual aid vouchsafed. In this case, we should spread every sail, seize the happy opportunity, "be instant in prayer," and make large advances towards the haven where we would be.

Watch *against* those *hindrances* which have already been mentioned, and need not be repeated. Your hearts are evil, watch over them at all times. This is needful to keep them in a proper state for prayer. Worldly-mindedness, or the indulgence of any sin in the heart, gradually unfits us for approaching Him, who "is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."§

Watch also *for matter for prayer*. Maintain a temper always ready to converse with God. "A man should be careful," says Bishop Wilkins, "to keep a register of the most remarkable passages of his life, as to God's dealings with him, and his conduct towards God; his sins and defects; his sufferings and wants; his mercies and enjoyments. A commonplace-book of this kind, arranged under the various heads of prayer, would be of great use."

Watch also *over your hearts in prayer*. If there be one time more than another, when the duty, "keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life," is incumbent on us, it is in the time of intercourse with the Majesty of Heaven. We should then specially take heed of uttering the words of penitence, faith, hope,

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* Luke xxi. 36.
† Col. iv. 2.
‡ 1 Pet. iv. 7.
§ Ps. lxvi. 18

and love, without a penitent, believing, hoping, and loving state of mind.

Lastly, watch for *answers to your prayers.* Take notice how they prosper, and whether you really gain what you ask. It has already been observed, how much comfort we lose by negligence in this respect. "I know," said one, "that the Bible is true, because I pray to God through Christ, and he hears me. I know also that God regards me, and loves me, because he gives me those very blessings which I ask at his hand." David found this a great means of increasing his love to God, and his spirit of prayer also. "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplication. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."* In the morning you prayed for such and such blessings, to be enjoyed in the day; at night, then, ask yourself. Did I gain these blessings? If so, "Praise the Lord:" if not, you did not ask in faith, or according to the will of God; or the Lord delays an answer to try your faith. Here are reasons for humiliation, confession, and persevering prayer.

All this watchfulness requires great patience and perseverance. It is easy to go through the round of outward forms and duties, but it is another thing to be "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." Hence, though the devout man be truly blessed, he is an uncommon character.

4. *Meditate before you pray.*—This is a most important part of preparation for prayer. We do not reflect on our state, we do not look within beforehand, and therefore we have so little fervency, or divine unction in our prayers. "While I was musing, the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue." We are apt to think time lost which is not spent in sensible and active duty; but devout thoughtfulness and reflection redeem time for the most valuable end. Previous to private prayer, endeavor to compose your thoughts, to attain a settled, calm, and attentive mind. Ask yourself, Why do I retire? what is my design? Examine yourself, and note down all that occurs in your mind as proper or advantageous to be said under each head of

* Ps. cxvi. 1, 2.

prayer. Self-examination should precede prayer. Consider beforehand the particular things which you wish to ask of God, so that you may ask freely, in order, and with method, those things which you need. And while approaching the house of the Lord for public worship, it is advantageous to meditate on the great work in which you are about to be engaged. The son of Sirach says, "before thou prayest, prepare thyself; and be not as one that tempts God." The musician sees that his instrument is in tune before he begins to play on it; and we should surely prepare our minds for prayer and praise. "Let your prayer," says the Rev. Mr. Adam, "be short, and think a long time before you begin, what you are going to say, and what you mean by it; that is, to speak plainly, whether you would be taken at your word, and put to the pain of having your prayers answered." "He who would pray," says Bishop Horne, "must first retire. Meditation, which is the mother of Devotion, is the daughter of Retirement. They who do not meditate, cannot pray; they who do not retire, can do neither." Profitable subjects of meditation abound. Consider the promises of God made to prayer; the character of Him you approach; and your own sinfulness. In the morning call to mind the duties which are before you in the approaching day, and ask for grace to fulfil them. In the evening, think on all that has occurred in the past day, and thus you will be better able to confess your sins, and to bless God for his mercies. And continue in meditation, says Bishop Taylor, "till you get some new arguments against sin, or some new encouragements to virtue, some spiritual strength and advantage, or some act of prayer to God, or praise of him." Gerson justly observes, that "Meditation is the nurse of prayer." "My mouth," says David, "shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches."* The sickle must be sharpened before we reap:—let us, then, by meditation, prepare our hearts for effective prayer.

5. *Ask in faith.*—The Scriptures insist much on this: James i. 6; Heb. x. 22; Matt. xxi. 22; Mark xi. 24. All true prayer comes from faith, (Rom. x. 12.) and is the voice and expression of faith. You need, in order to gain the

* Ps. lxiii. 6.

true spirit of devotion, an unwavering belief "that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him;"* that he is able to give us all we ask, and if it be for our real good, will do so. By faith realize his presence. Say with David, "He is about my path, and about my bed." Fully believe that his almighty power can help and save even in the uttermost extremity, and that he is willing to hear you when you call upon him. It is, in short, a true faith that will make all the difference between a cold, heartless, unprofitable form, like praying (as one expressed it to me) to nothing but empty air, and the real desire of the believer, which, poured out unto God for things according tc his will, is sure to succeed—because Christ hath purchased every blessing, and intercedes for us; it will make all the difference between a mere ceremony and the soul-reviving and heart-cheering presence of God. To faith in the presence of God, join an undoubting confidence in the faithfulness of his promises. Vincent says, "If we did but firmly believe that God, according to his covenant, for his Son's sake, has pardoned sin, and will heal our souls of their distempers, and will give grace sufficient, and make us to grow and increase with the increase of God; verily his promises would appear to be real, and according to our faith it would be to us." This confidence is perfectly consistent with the deepest humility, and the most entire distrust of ourselves. The larger our expectations are, the greater sense do we show of the generosity and bounty of our unseen, but ever-present and ever-gracious Benefactor. "We should endeavor," says Watts, "to impress our minds frequently with a fresh and lively belief of God's existence, though he be so much unknown; of his presence, though he be invisible; and of his just and merciful regard to all the actions of men." Some have found it a means of strengthening their faith, to appeal, in the midst of their prayers, to the attributes of God, and to plead his promises, and the name of his Son.

"The spirit and life of prayer in faith," says Trail, "lies more in expectation than in asking. Unwise Christians let out the vital spirit of prayer, when they let their expectations languish. When they set their face to pray, they make some conscience of searching out their wants;

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* eb xi 6.

they labor to improve that sight to the raising of fervent desires of a supply of them: if they yet go higher, to take in a sense of the fullness and freeness of that grace where their help is; yet, how rarely are they careful to raise up expectations of that helping grace! Few can say, 'As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me.'* Our way is, if we could see the glory, then we would believe; Christ's way is just the contrary; we must first believe, and then we shall see the glory of God." John xi. 40. "It is the very nature of prayer in faith," says Walker,† "to cast all manner of care and every burden on the Lord; guilt, corruption, trial, temptation, whatever it be, to come and lay it all upon Christ; and this with a certain confidence in him, which both does him the highest honor, and makes him best pleased with us. It charges Christ with all, and leaves every thing with him. It says, 'Lord, here are all these sins that I have done; here are all these temptations I have to struggle with; here are all these corruptions to subdue; here is all this work to be performed; and I am a poor helpless thing: behold, I humbly lay it all upon thee, and leave it all and every part with thee. And I know that thou canst, and thou hast told me thou wilt take care of the whole. It is thy gracious office to do so, and thou delightest to do it; Lord, I cast all my care on thee.' There is no other boldness in this than that to which the promises of God encourage and give sanction. Such is the very prayer of faith."

6. *Be simple, reverent, and grave.*—Simplicity in our prayers is a great attainment. Beware of setting more value on ingenious and original thoughts, than on devout affections, fixedness of mind, and devotedness of heart. One part of the true character of prayer is, to express all our necessity to our God with the utmost plainness and simplicity, as David did, when he could say, "I poured out my complaint before him, I showed before him my trouble."‡ No art is needed; no extraordinary talent required; the right feeling of the heart is the great thing. "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them."§ But avoid haste and precipitation, as

* Ps. lv. 16.

† See his Fifty-two Sermons on the Church Catechism.

‡ Ps. cxlii. 2 § Ps. cxlv 19.

if you were going through a task which you wished to be over, that you may get to your worldly employments. Remember, this, this is the grand business. It is the most serious and solemn affair in which you can be engaged. Any thing like affectation, any thing that borders on an undue attention to elegance of language, or approaches to mere vehemence of gesture, should be carefully avoided. Let us not mimic devotion, but seek to be really devout. Avoid also any particular tone of voice. The character of prayer is well stated by Bonnell, where he observes, "Devotion is to the soul what blood is to the body, which is the life of it. The best state of the body is when the blood moves regularly and evenly, and we are least sensible that we have such a thing as moving blood within us. It is so when it is in its best condition, and we are in firm health. Convulsive and extraordinary motions in our bodies are not signs of health, but of sickness. So our soul is in the best state, when our mind, in our devotion, has a composed and gracious intercourse with God, in such intenseness and recollectedness of thought, that we are hardly sensible ourselves that we are at our devotion."* "Fine words and eloquent phrases," says Parr, "are not that wherein God delights; but reverence, contrition, faith, and the groanings of the spirit, however homely the words be. Strive more to pray with feeling than to be eloquent." Great seriousness and gravity should mark every prayer we make.

7. *Aim to enjoy a holy freedom and boldness of access to God.*—By the faith of Christ we may "have boldness and access with confidence."† There should be the liberty of the child joined to the humility of the creature. Our great necessity, and the faithful promises, and holy examples of the word of God, invite us to a resolute and determined spirit, that will wrestle and plead with God for the blessing; and like Jacob, take no denial. "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."‡ Our most gracious God thus suffers himself to be prevailed on, and is willingly overcome. "None that wait on him shall be ashamed." You should, you may, tell him all your desires freely and fully, without hiding any thing from him. This liberty of access was purchased for us by our Lord. "Having bold-

* See Hamilton's Life of Bonnell. † Eph. iii. 12.
‡ Gen. xxxii. 26.

ness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh, and having an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart."* Importunity, or urgent demand and entreaty, αναιδεια, an urgency, that will not be repulsed, is recommended by an example which our Lord himself brings before us. Luke xi. 8. Yet beware of presumptuousness, or any think like irreverence. Observe how Abraham pleads for Sodom; (Gen. xviii. 27. 30—32,) he pleads freely and boldly; yet with what reverence and humility he urges his pleas!

8. *Be sincere and fervent.*—Sincerity in prayer is an unfeigned desire that God would grant our petitions. "It is easy," says the Rev. Mr. Adam, "to say the words of a prayer; but to pray hungering and thirsting is the greatest of all works. Acquiescence in the bare act of prayer is a most dangerous delusion, and keeps the soul from its proper relief." We cannot be too much warned against the mere external service to which we are so constantly prone, and which is the bane of all spiritual good. The Scriptures often insist on the provocation which a merely external service offers to God. Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 32. Our Lord repeatedly reproves the Pharisees, for their formal prayers. Consider, then, the amazing value of those spiritual blessings for which you ask; believe that God, and God alone, can, and he will give them; and this will, by his grace, help you to be both sincere and fervent in your prayers.

Augustine confesses to God, "In the entrance on youth, I had prayed for chastity, and had said, 'Give me chastity and continence, but grant not my request immediately; for I was afraid lest thou shouldest quickly hear my prayer, and heal this distemper of concupiscence, which I wished rather to be fully gratified than extinguished." Such an example should instruct us. Let us really desire that which we ask.† "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him in truth."‡ "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."§ It has been observed, "In our prayers, sincerity is their best art, simplicity their garb, and zeal their gloss." It is evident that the

* Heb. x. 19—22.
† 1 John iii. 22; John ix. 31.
‡ Ps. cxlv. 18.
§ Jer. xxix. 13.

mind should devote itself entirely to the solemn exercise, and dismissing all foreign and outward cares, be as far as possible carried above them. How defective, then, are our prayers! how needful our Savior's intercession! how all-important is the aid of his Spirit! Guard also against that sinful sloth and indifference which is often indulged in, from the vain idea, that, if our intentions be right, any substance or form of prayer will serve. Offer not to God such imperfect sacrifices.* It may assist you in ascertaining your sincerity, often to ask yourself questions on your prayers, as, "did I really desire what I asked?" &c.

And be not merely sincere; aim also at fervency of desire. "The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much." But we too generally get over it as a task: we put not forth our strength to it. Custom turns it into a fruitless formality. Yet all the various expressions by which prayer is described in the Scriptures, point out to us the sincerity and fervency of true devotion.—It is to "call upon the name of the Lord,"† to "stretch forth the hands to him,"‡ to "follow hard after him,"§ "to take hold of God,"‖ to "pour out the heart before him,"¶ as it were to empty all the desires of the soul.—It is, to give the Lord no rest."** It is "striving in prayers."†† "Always laboring fervently in prayers."‡‡ Now it is evident that expressions of this kind show that it is not a trifling matter in which we are engaged; they imply the greatest earnestness in spirit. And when we consider how immensely valuable are the blessings which we ask, pardon, peace, holiness, victory over Satan, acceptance in the day of judgment, and eternal life: surely the most vehement and earnest longings and ardent desires are but suitable and becoming. How strong are the expressions of God's dislike of lukewarmness!§§ The fervor of devotion will be much promoted by constant perseverance in the performance of this duty. "The chariot wheel is warmed by its own motion." But after all, remember the caution, that though where God inclines the heart fervently to pray, he usually bestows the blessing; yet we are not

* Mal. i. 13, 14.
† Rom. x. 13.
‡ Job xi. 13.
§ Ps. lxiii. 8.
‖ Isa. lxiv. 7.
¶ Ps. lxii. 8.
** Isa. lxii 7.
†† Rom. xv. 30
‡‡ Col. iv. 12.
§§ Rev. iii. 16.

to draw our hopes of success merely from our fervency, but only from the name of Christ.

9. *Be frequent and persevering.*—Appoint the most convenient times, and be constant in keeping to them. Let your hours of prayer be duly regulated and constantly observed. The Apostle exhorts us to the duty of "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." Undoubtedly our many wants and dangers, and the examples of the Bible, call for daily, regular, constant, and incessant prayer. Undoubtedly also, it requires much patient perseverance, really to maintain the spirit of devotion. Your evil heart, your great spiritual enemy, your old habits, your present ease and indulgence, and perhaps those about you, oppose. But "be not weary in well doing." Grudge not the time which you spend in devotion. It is the most truly profitable way of passing time. Perseverance in prayer will carry away the blessing. Consider the example of the woman of Canaan, who thus gained her desire from our Lord.* This is written for our encouragement. Consider the case of Moses being obliged to hold up his hands in prayer during the whole battle with Amalek. Do you think it presumptuous? nay, it is most pleasing and acceptable to God. The whole scope of one of our Lord's parables is, to teach us that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint."† He said, "There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man; and there was a widow in that city, and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while; but afterwards he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this woman troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith! And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them!" It is every day's practice in earthly things, for men to persevere in their requests, and to send in petition after petition till they obtain their wishes. It is the character of true devotion, that it will not desist from seeking till it gain the desired spiritual blessing. Blind Bartimeus persevering notwithstanding all discouragements, at length gains his request.‡ Our Savior has left us

* Matt. xv. 22. † Luke xviii. 1. ‡ Mark x. 48.

an example of his holy perseverance, when he himself, in the garden of Gethsemane, persevered in repeatedly asking, with the same words, that help which he needed. We ought, then, to pray with restless importunity and perseverance. The same duty is brought before us in the following parable :* "Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him; and he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend; yet because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh findeth: and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. How gracious is that merciful Father, who by these examples teaches us to continue praying; and how inexcusable will we be, if after such an encouragement, we do not persevere in asking for his blessing!

10. *Be humbled and self-abased.* This spirit should mark all your prayers. "The foundation of prayer," says Paley, "in all cases, is a sense of want. No man prays in earnest, or to any purpose, for what he does not feel that he wants. Know, then, and feel the weakness of your nature." "The great mistake of prayer," says the Rev. Mr. Adam, "is, not praying as poor and destitute creatures; but thinking that we are and have already in some degree what we pray for." God "forgetteth not the cry of the humble."† Even when the wicked king Manasseh "humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him," we read that God "was entreated of him."‡ The Savior himself says, "Not my will but thine be done." If one grace more than another has God's special approbation, and is attended with multiplied spiritual advantages, it is that of humility.§ The humble man, being

* Luke xi. 5—10. † Ps. ix. 12; x. 17. ‡ 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13.

§ An old writer, commending humility in prayer as advantageous in prosperity as well as affliction, thus illustrates it—"Vessels whose

deeply sensible of his own need, the more he receives, the more he feels his indigence; he expects all from mere mercy, and pleads nothing, but his own worthlessness and necessity; and, having a broken and contrite spirit, he waits with patience till God have mercy, thinking the smallest blessing above his deserts. Cultivate, then, a spirit of humility. When we pray for any grace, let us be ready to confess our faultiness in that particular, and acknowledge our utter inability of ourselves to work it in our hearts. Let us remember what an awfully great and holy being He is, and how sinful we are at the best! and how the glorified spirits veil their faces, fall down, and worship before God.* Many are the advantages of humility; "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."† "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart."‡ The tears of the penitent avail much with him. When "Hezekiah wept sore,"§ his prayer was heard. It is said of the people of God returning to Zion, "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them."|| The showers of heaven run off the high and steep hills, leaving them dry and barren, while the lowly valleys are saturated with the refreshing rain, and become fruitful. Go to the throne of grace, not in the spirit of the self-conceited Pharisee, fancying yourselves better than others; but in the humility of the publican, crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Bishop Wilkins justly observes, "our most enlarged devotions are nothing worth without the fruit of humble and upright conversation, and with this consequent, our coldest and most restrained prayer may be looked upon as successful." "The High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, dwells with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit."¶ It is by going in this spirit, relying on the merits, obedience, and intercession of the Savior, that we shall find acceptance with

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sails are filled, if well ballasted, run a more steady course; so it is with saints, when they pray with full-sailed joy of faith; yet while this holy ballast of humility is in the hold of the heart, and not merely aloft in show above deck, appearing to men, they are not soon lifted up with every good success they meet with, but keep low and deep, and carry it evenly before the Lord, as humbly, if not more humbly, than before." See Cobbett on Prayer, page 283.

* Rev. v. 8—14. † James iv. 10. ‡ Ps. xxxiv. 8.
§ 2 Kings xx. 4. || Jer. xxxi. 9. ¶ Isa. lvii. 15.

God. Observe how humble are the prayers of God's servants. See those of Abraham, (Gen. xviii. 27.) Jacob, (Gen. xxviii. 17, 18.) David, (Ps. li.) Job, (xl. 4; xlii. 6.) Isaiah, (vi. 6.) Ezra, (ix. 6.) and even the Lord Jesus Christ, (Heb. v. 7.) We may abase ourselves more than we ought before man, but we cannot be too humble when we come before God; and the nearer access we have unto his glorious majesty, the more humble we shall be. "Let us have grace," then, "that we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear."*

In conclusion, we are led to remark, that even a cursory view of these rules is calculated to show us how defective, in every one of them, our prayers have been and still are. If we examine our past prayers by them, we may learn the reason why we have derived so little benefit from prayer; we may see more of our fallen condition; and be led to apply, without delay, for an interest in the only atonement for sin, and for that divine strength which alone can enable us to overcome sin and serve God acceptably.

But be not discouraged by the strictness here recommended, and think that the work of prayer is altogether impracticable, because you cannot discharge it perfectly. Aim high, and you are more likely to attain to a good degree in Christian grace, with that humility which ever marks the Christian character; besides, let us never forget

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* Heb. xii. 28. Having given the preceding general rules as principally necessary to be attended to, I sum up in a note what might farther be said, by extracting from an old writer the following Rules of Practice.

I. *Before Prayer.*—Meditate on the promises and presence of God.—Ask his gracious help, and the evidence of his Spirit.—Lay aside all malice, guile, envy, hatred, and seek to have thy heart filled with heavenly love.—Remember thy own vileness, and God's awful majesty.—Disburthen thy mind of worldly thoughts and cares

II. *In Prayer.*—Lift up thy heart with thy hands, and place before thee Christ and his merits.—Watch over thy thoughts.—Recover thyself from distractions, and improve them to thy further humiliation and watchfulness.

III. *After Prayer.*—Thank the Lord for any degree of liberty or enlargement.—Pray for pardon and the sprinkling blood of atonement.—Wait God's leisure.—Mark answers to prayer when God gives thee greater confidence in his love; more cheerfulness of spirit; grace to persevere in the face of many denials; a spirit of self-examination and circumspection; and when he gives thee thy requests, let it stir thee up to thankfulness, and quicken thee in his way

what a fountain of spiritual life, what a powerful, gracious, and glorious Savior we have; a sun whose rays can warm the coldest heart, and whose beams can enliven the dullest spirit. Let us never forget what a mighty and gracious helper we have in the blessed Spirit, who "helpeth our infirmities." You will find, that nothing is impossible to those united to Christ by living faith, and abiding in him, and receiving the daily supply of his Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN EXHORTATION TO CONSTANT PRAYER.

Prayer being at the root of every other good, marking the commencement of the Christian life, being the pulse by which its strength and vigor may be known, or the hands by which its daily nourishment is obtained and ministered, the reader will bear with me while I attempt still farther to press this duty on the conscience.

There are two things which will ever bring the Christian to the throne of grace:—A sense of his own wants; and a desire to enjoy the presence of God.

God having promised to supply all his wants, his prayers are the importunate wrestling of the soul with God for blessings of infinite moment. And God being the portion of his soul, he finds in his presence the sweet and unspeakable repose of the soul on God, his exceeding great reward.

"Prayer," says Bishop Taylor, "is the effect and the exercise, the beginning and the promoter of all graces. A holy life is a continual prayer. Prayer is the peace of our spirit, the stillness of our thoughts, the rest of our cares, the calm of our tempest."

1. Yet there are many *who have neglected prayer*, and this in all, or at least in some of its branches. Such persons will often be dissatisfied, complaining of others; and though in the midst, perhaps, of abundance of earthly good things, yet would they declare their real state, they would be found discontented and unhappy. And is this to be wondered at? God is your Creator. He is the Governor of the universe. He makes men happy; when he leaves them,

they are miserable; and yet you neglect to seek him. You do not pursue his plans. You do not follow the directions which he has given you for obtaining his blessings, and therefore you have them not. But can you think that you will always have an opportunity of seeking him? O no! remember, that there is an "accepted time, a day of salvation," and that it is our highest duty and our plainest interest to "seek the Lord, while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near." But, perhaps, you defer seeking God to the close of life, or to a period of sickness. O most dangerous delusion! To be careful about the temporal enjoyment of a day, and to suspend eternal happiness on the most improbable of all chances! It is almost certain that if you do from day to day put off the duty of prayer, deceiving yourself with the intention of calling on God in such a period, God will not, in that day, give you either grace or ability to pray to him. You will perish in your sins. There is neither safety nor happiness but in constant prayer. If you would obtain the waters of life, you must come to the fountain. If you would drink of the streams, you must come to the banks of that "river which maketh glad the city of our God." Perhaps you think prayer to be needless or useless. But is not this sad folly? You think it necessary to inquire, "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" necessary to seek after the provision of more temporal wants; and yet you can be careless about the pardon of your sins, the salvation of your soul, the eternal ruin of hell, and the everlasting glory of heaven. Prayer is no more to be esteemed needless, than eternal bliss is needless. No man ever repented of prayer. Baxter says, "I often repent that I have prayed to him so coldly, and communed with him so negligently, and served him so remissly; but I never repent of the time, care, affection, or diligence employed in this holy work."

2. Some are *ashamed of prayer.*—They think that it is the mark of a weak, or superstitious mind. They are afraid of being laughed at and ridiculed by their ungodly companions; and perhaps they have no place to which they can retire to be alone. But is it not the grossest ignorance, weakness, and delusion, to be afraid of the ridicule of a perishing, guilty man, and regardless of the displeasure of the ever-living and ever-blessed God? Only be firm,

and constant, in your devotions, and you will soon put to shame the ridicule of your companions, or God will manifestly appear on your side. Imitate Daniel's noble openness and frankness, his firm decision, and integrity of devotion, (Dan. iv. 35,) and you may expect to be carried through every difficulty. It is not a mark of a weak and little mind, but of the deepest wisdom, of the highest grandeur, and nobleness of spirit, to hold constant intercourse with the Lord of heaven and earth. The true weakness, the real littleness, is to be afraid of a worm, a creature of a day, mere dust and ashes.*

3. There are others *who did once pray with earnestness and fervor, but they have become remiss or careless.*—Some alarming sermons, some terrors of conscience, some dangerous event, and some convictions of sin, once excited you to seek God: but now, both your fears and your prayers have passed away, or at least you are unsteady and negligent. David describes the case, Ps. lxxviii. 34—37. How precious once were the hours of prayer! How delightful a place was your closet! How tears filled your eyes while you confessed your sinfulness, or thanked God for his mercies! But now, all is cold and dull. Surely your own conscience will most powerfully condemn you, and plead with me when I exhort you to renewed efforts to obtain the spirit of grace and supplication. "Prayer," says Cooke, "is compared to incense; and if the smoke of it ceases to rise up before God, it is a sure sign that the light of divine knowledge and the fire of divine love are

* The following fact will show that God's blessing to others may also attend a faithful discharge of our own duty.

A pious man was once led by some common engagement to associate a whole day with a minister who had greatly neglected his sacred duties. Their business took them from home, and they had much conversation together on religious subjects. At night they came to the same inn, and found that they could only have one bed room. The minister was soon undressed and in bed, without saying any prayer. His companion at first hesitated whether he should put out the candle and then pray, or say his prayers openly. He thought that his duty at that time led him not to be ashamed of prayer, and he prayed, extinguished the light, and went to bed. This faithful discharge of duty was not lost on him who had gone prayerless to bed. The conversation which he had heard, and the example which he had seen, left a deep and abiding impression on his mind, and from that time he became a faithful and laborious minister of Christ.

both extinguished in the heart." The exhortation belongs to you—"O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." Are the realities of a dying bed and the judgment day less near, or less important than they once were? Nay, every day is bringing you nearer and nearer to them. Every day is of more importance, and shortens that little span of life, in which we have to escape the misery of hell, and gain the heavenly mansions. Lose not a moment—plead earnestly for the renewed spirit of prayer. Think not that your sin is beyond forgiveness, and therefore now prayer is of no use. Let not Satan so tempt you. Again seek the presence of God, and it will be a proof that you are not yet given up to a reprobate mind. Even in the wicked city of Nineveh, when they cried mightily unto the Lord, they were spared. Now if God heard the Ninevites crying for temporal blessings, doubt not but he will hear you, when you earnestly implore pardon, peace, and salvation. Yet there is a way open to the throne of grace; and so long as it is open, you need not be miserable, you need not be unhelped.

4. Others are *endeavoring to live in constant prayer.*—They need no proof of the obligation, no additional argument, to show them that it is their duty. But perhaps they are often discouraged and cast down by their difficulties in attaining a constant spirit of devotion. If, however, you are desiring and seeking, Augustine justly says, "If he seeks, let him not doubt but that the desire of seeking has been received from him whom he seeks." And may I not say, when you really attain a good measure of the spirit of devotion, you enjoy a peace of God which passeth all understanding; it is your privilege—your happiness. You have free communication with the Lord of Lords and King of Kings—You are permitted to come nearer to him on all occasions. He grants all your requests, and supplies all your wants. On account of our corrupt nature, it requires indeed watchfulness, patience, and perseverance, to maintain this spirit of prayer, but you find it to be its own reward. Let us not then be content with small measures of the grace of supplication: let us seek to attain more and more of this gift: and soon, the work of prayer ended, the never-ceasing song of praise will commence, which will endure through the boundless ages of eternity.

But let me speak to every reader.

Christian Ministers! We should be men of prayer; it is the half of our duty, and that by which we carry on the rest. "We will," say the Apostles, "give ourselves continually to prayer, and the ministry of the word." The prayers of ministers avail much. We may expect more assistance than others. It is the divine direction for our people—"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him." When Abimelech was threatened with death, he was told to send for Abraham; and the reason given was, "for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live." Should not we then abound in prayer?

Christian parents! We next address you. Pray for your children. "Whenever," says Bishop Hopkins, "thou comest unto the throne of grace, bring these thy dear pledges upon thy heart with thee. Earnestly implore of God that he would own them, and provide for them as his own children: that he would adopt them into the family of heaven, make them heirs of glory, and co-heirs with Jesus Christ: that he would give them a convenient portion of good things for this life, that they may serve him with the more cheerfulness and alacrity; and a large portion of spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus; and at length bring them to the heavenly inheritance. And know assuredly that the prayers of parents are very effectual, and have a kind of authority in them to obtain what they sue for. This is the blessing which holy fathers in Scripture have bestowed on their children. Thus Abraham asked, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" Thus Jacob prayed for and blessed his children and his grandchildren. Thus Job remembered his children, and "offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all." Bring them up, also, in the practice of prayer. They cannot too early begin to seek their Savior and to lisp his praise. No habit will be more profitable to them than that of daily prayer. Teach your children this, and they will then rise up and call you blessed. Store their young minds with the Scriptures, furnish them with short portions for all occasions. This will arm them with invincible strength against their enemies. They are about to journey through a dangerous wilderness; teach them to pray, morning and evening, and it will direct their way, "like that pillar which guided Israel through the wilderness, as a cloud by

day to shadow them, and as a fire by night to comfort them."

Prayer is a duty at all times and in all seasons of life.

Are you *in prosperity?* Let prayer and praise sanctify all your enjoyments. Great is the snare of outward prosperity. How "hardly shall they that are rich enter into the kingdom of heaven!" You have need to pray much, lest that which was designed as a talent for great usefulness, occasion your eternal ruin. Let nothing hinder you from giving regular and full time to devotion. The days of health and strength should be given to God, "while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

Are you *afflicted?* That is the time for special prayer. "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will hear thee, and thou shalt glorify me." In the absence of the sun, the mild and peaceful radiance of the moon illumines our path. Let devotion spread a cheering light over your darker hours. "The Queen of night," says Bowdler, "unveils its full beauty when the hours of joy and lustre have passed away, pouring as it were a holy light through the damps and darkness of adversity." Thus will constant prayer cheer the darkest season of affliction.

Are you *young?* Let that rapid torrent of youthful strength and vivacity, which, if left to itself, would only be wasted and dashed against rocks, from precipice to precipice, be turned into a profitable course. Let this stream be brought into the channel of devotion, and it will move the machine of the Christian life, and communicate innumerable blessings to man. "Those that seek me early shall find me."* Nothing is more pleasing, nothing more profitable, than early devotion. Slight not him in your strength, who will be the only protector of your weakness.

Are you in *middle life?* In the midst of this world's engagements, how are you encompassed as in a maze of temptation! Let prayer be the secret thread which leads you safely out of this labyrinth. How are you surrounded with duties of the first importance! What a happy influence, then, would devotion have in making you a general blessing to your family, your neighborhood, and your country! Like the regulator in the watch, though unseen out-

* Prov. viii. 17. † Eccles. vii. 1.

wardly, it would keep the spring of your actions in order; it would make all your movements certain and useful. Give the strength of your years to God, and you will leave "a good name better than precious ointment."* Remember, "the prayer of faith," as Bishop Porteus says, "moves the hands of him that moveth all things."

Are you in *declining years?* and will you not hold converse with Him whom you are soon to meet and see face to face? Why should you enter the eternal world a stranger to the great King who rules there, when you have an opportunity of being adopted into his family, enjoying his presence here, and sharing the splendors of his crown and of his glories hereafter. "What," says one, "can be more truly desirable than to attain to a measure of that light and peace, which, in their full measure, belong to a higher condition? and what more excellent than that occupation which connects the service with the enjoyment of God, the duties of this life with the glories of the better?"

To every class of my readers I say,

PRAY WITHOUT CEASING.

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* Eccles. vii. 1.

HYMNS ON PRAYER

I.

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
  Utter'd or unexpress'd;
The motion of a hidden fire
  That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the burthen of a sigh,
  The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye,
  When none but God is near.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech,
  That infant lips can try;
Prayer the sublimest strains that reach
  The Majesty on high.

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
  The Christian's native air,
His watchword at the gates of death,
  He enters heaven with prayer.

Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice,
  Returning from his ways;
While angels in their songs rejoice,
  And say, "Behold, he prays!"

The saints in prayer, appear as one,
  In word, in deed, and mind,
When, with the Father and the Son,
  Their fellowship they find.

Nor prayer is made on earth alone;
  The Holy Spirit pleads;
And Jesus, on th' eternal throne,
  For sinners intercedes.

O Thou, by whom we come to God,
  The Life, the Truth, the Way,
The path of Prayer Thyself hast trod,
  Lord, teach us how to pray. *Montgomery.*

II.

Though "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord!"
  Seraph to seraph sings;
And angel choirs, with one accord,
  Worship with veiling wings:

Though Earth thy footstool, Heaven thy throne,
  Thy way amid the sea,
Thy path deep floods, thy steps unknown,
  Thy counsels mystery:

Yet wilt thou look on him who lies
  A suppliant at thy feet;
And hearken to the feeblest cries,
  That reach thy mercy-seat.

Between the cherubim, of old,
  Thy glory was express'd;
But God, in Christ, we now behold,
  In flesh made manifest.

Through Him, who all our sickness felt,
  Who all our sorrows bears;
Through Him, in whom thy fullness dwelt,
  We offer up our prayers.

Touch'd with a feeling of our woes,
  Jesus our High Priest stands;
All our infirmities he knows,
  Our souls are in his hands.

He bears them up with strength divine,
  When at thy feet we fall;
Lord! cause thy face on us to shine;
  Hear us; on Thee we call. *Montgomery.*

III.

Lord! teach us how to pray aright,
  With rev'rence and with fear;
Though dust and ashes in thy sight,
  We may, we must, draw near.

We perish, if we cease from prayer;
  O grant us power to pray:
And when to meet thee we prepare,
  Lord, meet us by the way.

Give deep humility; the sense
  Of godly sorrow give;
A strong desiring confidence
  To hear thy voice, and live.

Faith in the only Sacrifice
  That can for sin atone;
To cast our hopes, to fix our eyes,
  On Christ, on Christ alone;

Patience to watch, and wait, and weep,
  Though mercy long delay;
Courage our fainting souls to keep,
  And trust thee, though thou slay:

Give these;—and then thy will be done;
  Thus strengthen'd with all might,
We, by thy Spirit, through thy Son,
  Shall pray, and pray aright. *Montgomery.*

IV.

Lord! when we bend before thy throne,
  And our confessions pour,
Teach us to feel the sins we own,
  And hate what we deplore.

Our broken spirit pitying see;
  True penitence impart:
Then let a kindling glance from thee
  Beam hope on every heart.

When we disclose our wants in prayer,
  May we our wills resign;
And not a thought our bosom share,
  That is not wholly thine.

May faith each weak petition fill,
  And raise it to the skies,
And teach our heart 'tis Goodness still
  That grants it, or denies.

CHAPTER XV.

FORMS OF PRAYER

THE writer's design has been to induce his readers generally to pray in private and in the family without forms. Yet as this work may fall into the hands of many, to whom this, from various causes, would not immediately be practicable, he adds a few Forms of Prayer.

He has, in two or three instances, put the names of the parts of prayer to the forms, as a means of assisting those who may use them to learn the divisions of prayer.

In the part of Confession in the different prayers, the writer has mentioned those sins which are most common. The person who uses the form may easily alter it according to circumstances.

These forms must rather be considered as hints to be improved on than examples to copy. Much of the interest of private and family prayer depends on personal and local circumstances. Let us endeavor to attain that spirit of grace and supplication which enables the Christian, in a strain of holy devotion, to bring the changing circumstances and events of life before the throne of grace, comforts his own heart in private prayer, and edifies and interests all about him in family worship.

PRAYER FOR THE GIFT AND GRACE OF PRAYER.

O thou eternal and ever blessed God, who art the Author and Giver of every good gift, and who hast promised so many and such great blessings to them that call upon thee, hear me now, I beseech thee, through Jesus Christ.

Lord, I confess my utter inability to seek thee aright. I am encompassed with infirmities ; I acknowledge my indisposition to prayer; I bewail my backwardness and reluctance to hold converse with God.

Teach me rightly to feel this my weakness and helplessness. Give me a more complete knowledge of my insufficiency. Convince me of the need that I have of thy divine assistance, and grant me earnest desires after thy salvation. Create in me an hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Impart to me a holy liberty of soul in calling upon

thee. Heavenly Father, Fountain of light and life, I do not ask for earthly riches, vain pleasures, human honors; but I do humbly ask for the spirit of prayer, for the heart ever prepared and ready to call upon God.

It is thy promise that thou wilt give the Holy Spirit to them that ask. I ask, do thou give: I seek, grant that I may find; I knock, let it be opened unto me. Help me to pray in the Holy Ghost. Help me to live daily in constant believing prayer. Lord, teach me to pray.

By nature proud and self-sufficient, I am prone to think and act as if I needed not thy help; but O teach me to know how poor and how needy I really am; and knowing my great and many necessities, and my entire dependence on thee, give me the disposition, from day to day, and from hour to hour, to seek thy help and strength.

Enable me entirely to confide in thy almighty power, thy boundless compassion, thy infinite love, and thy amazing mercy. Let the gift of thy Son Jesus Christ, and his intercession for sinners, encourage me to approach thee. Help me to pray, relying only on his merits, and through him may I learn to come boldly to the throne of grace.

Let nothing keep me from God. May I renounce all known sin, and all carnal indulgences, and not be conformed to this world. Enable me to resist the temptations of Satan, to watch against self-righteousness and spiritual pride, and never to neglect the study of thy word.

Give me grace, whenever I seek thee, to look for the aid of thy Holy Spirit, to trust only in the name of thy Son, and to watch unto prayer. Let me not be rash with my mouth; but, meditating before I pray, may I ask in faith, in simplicity of mind, with filial freedom of spirit, in sincerity of heart, and fervency of desire, praying always with all prayer, and watching thereunto with all perseverance. And, after having done all, may I ever consider myself an unprofitable servant.

Grant me thy Holy Spirit to help my infirmities, for I know not what to pray for as I ought; grant me thy Holy Spirit to make intercession for me with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Give me, O give me this great gift, the spirit of grace and supplication, for thy dear Son's sake, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRIVATE MORNING PRAYER.

Merciful God, give ear unto me, when I cry to thee, in the name of Jesus Christ. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up. Lord, help me to pray.

Confession.

Great is the need that I have to seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near. I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. The things of the world, the lust of the eye, and the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, are continually tempting me, and leading me astray from thee. My affections towards thee, my God, are cold and dull. My tempers are often unsanctified. I am prone to depart from thee, and lukewarm and indifferent when I ought to have a holy zeal. I too much neglect and trifle with my own salvation, and the salvation of my relatives and friends. I have little of that spiritual mind which is life and peace. My temptations are many: I often yield to them; I have no strength of my own to resist them.

Petition.

I beseech thee, therefore, O my God, to be very merciful to me a sinner. Incline and enable me to come to Jesus Christ, weary and heavy laden as I am, and may I find rest in him. Teach me my own guilt and ruin; and help me to rely on his blood, and build all my hopes on his righteousness. God grant that, being grafted in Christ, I may live to him. Suffer me not to deceive myself by a mere form and profession of religion; but give me true faith that I may really abide in Christ and bear much fruit. Quicken thou my soul. Make my heart pure, humble, and devout; and my conversation holy and heavenly. Thou art my Rock, and in thee do I trust. Thou art my Strength, O establish me. Help me to live near to thee all the day long; and do thou preserve me from that sin which does so easily beset me.

Give me grace this day to overcome temptation, and to mortify all my corrupt affections. Grant unto me the abundance of thy Holy Spirit. Lord, I deserve not the blessing: I have forfeited the mercy: but, O thou with

whom is the residue of the Spirit, for the glory of thy name, and according to thy faithful promise, give me thy Spirit, that I may never dishonor thee by inconsistency and unfruitfulness, but abound in every good work, and walk worthy of the Gospel of Christ. Enable me to begin anew this day, in seriousness, and entire dedication of heart to give myself to thee.

Lord, help me this day to live in prayer, to watch against the peculiar temptations of my station, to embrace every opportunity of doing good, to redeem the time, and to make steady advances in that narrow way which leadeth to eternal life.

Thanksgiving.

And while I pray to thee for those mercies which I need, I would, from the heart, thank thee for all those great blessings which I have received, and do from day to day enjoy. The benefit of quiet repose, the renewal of my strength, the light which I enjoy, and the better light of life; these, and all the mercies which surround me on awaking, call for my unfeigned thanksgiving, and I do praise and bless thee for them. Blessed be thou for redeeming mercy. Blessed be thou that Jesus died for sinners, even for me. Thanks be unto thee, that grace, pardon, peace, strength, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life, are given to sinners, through faith in Christ. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us to be kings and priests unto God, and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Intercession.

O Lord God, let the bright glory and happy dominion of our Lord Jesus Christ spread through the world. Increase both the number and the zeal of those seeking the good of Sion, and the enlargement of thy Son's kingdom. Grant thy blessing to every effort to make the unsearchable riches of Christ known to the Gentiles. Give unto thy people Israel the new heart and the new spirit. Bless our favored country, so that it may be a highly-honored instrument in diffusing the light of truth abroad; and grant that every exertion for that end may be a means of reviving true religion in all our hearts at home. Bless all in authority. Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness, and thy peo-

ple sing for joy. May peace and mercy be granted to al. my relatives, and rest on my own soul, and in my own family. May we, and all thy people, be united in one heart and mind in thy service and love, praying for each other, bearing one another's burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ. Hear me, for his name's sake. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

ANOTHER PRIVATE MORNING PRAYER.

Almighty and heavenly Father, who art about my path, and about my bed, and spiest out all my ways; I come to thee in the name of thy beloved Son, and in obedience to his directions, to enter my closet, and shut to my door, and pray to my Father which is in secret.

Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me, my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. I laid me down, and slept; I awaked, for thou, Lord, sustained me. For restored light, for life, and health, and strength, I praise and bless thee. Thou, Lord, only, keepest me in safety, and free from evil. Thou providest for all my wants. May my soul, and all that is within me, magnify God for all his goodness, and especially for his wonderful mercy in redeeming sinners by Jesus Christ; for the light of that Sun of Righteousness, which arises with healing in his wings on benighted souls; for all the blessings of free salvation through him, all the means of grace, and the hope of future glory.

Sad are the returns which I have made for so many mercies. How ungrateful have I been! I acknowledge and bewail my manifold sins and rebellions. I was born in sin, and a child of wrath, and I find continually the flesh lusting against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, so that I cannot do the things that I would. I am guilty, sinful, and weak. Lord, save me, or I perish. I entirely depend on thy mercy, in Christ Jesus, for the gift and continuance of every good, and for deliverance from all those evils which I have justly deserved.

For that mercy I now earnestly look to thee, O Father of mercies. Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that thou bearest unto thy people. O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance. May the grace of God which bringeth

salvation, teach me, and all men, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. Enable me now, and ever hereafter, to seek the glory of thy holy name, by fulfilling every duty of my station conscientiously and diligently.

Give me grace to be continually looking to thee, through this day, for direction, assistance, and strength. Be thou in all my thoughts, and let me acknowledge thee in all my ways.

Give me the same mind that was in Christ Jesus, that I may be humble, patient, gentle, and full of love, even as he was. Teach me to be poor in spirit, and meek; to mourn for sin, and to hunger and thirst after righteousness; and thus shall I obtain the blessings of the kingdom of Christ. Grant that I may love that Savior whom I have not seen, and believing in him may I rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

And here, constrained by thy mercies, I would afresh present my body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto thee, which is my reasonable service. I renew in thy presence all the solemn vows made in Baptism and at thy Table, renouncing the world, the flesh, and the Devil; and stedfastly purposing, by thy help, to keep thy holy will and commandments, and walk in the same, this and every day of my life. I take thee, O God, for my portion, and thy laws as my rule, and thy service as my duty, entreating thee to give me grace that I may be wholly thine.

And O that all mankind knew and served thee. Grant that the kingdom which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, may be established in every land, in every heart. Fulfil thy gracious promises. Send thy Gospel to the Gentiles, and let them be turned from darkness to light. Let the kingdoms of this world speedily become the kingdoms of our God and his Christ, that he may reign for ever.

Grant the abundance of thy Holy Spirit to the ministers of Christ everywhere, and especially to him who watches over my soul. Bless the place and the neighborhood in which I live, and prosper every effort to do good.

Lord, I beseech thee, also, to bless my more immediate relations. Regard with thy favor my parents, my brothers and sisters, my benefactors and friends, my connexions and acquaintance. Look upon them in mercy, and visit them

with thy salvation. Hear these prayers, for the only sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

PRIVATE PRAYER AT NOON.

O Lord God Almighty, my God, my refuge, and my strength, incline my heart to seek thee in the name of Jesus Christ, and hear my prayer for his sake.

It is one of my highest privileges, and of my greatest mercies, that thine ear is ever open to the prayer of those that call upon thee. Give me, then, thy Spirit, that I may at all times call upon the name of the Lord. At evening, at morning, and at noon-day, will I pray, and thou shalt hear my voice.

I am, indeed, a sinful and a needy creature. My wants are many, and my necessities are urgent. My faith is weak, my repentance imperfect, my affections are wandering; my heart is hard, my pride is great, and my sins are innumerable. I fail continually both in love to thee and love to my neighbor, and am verily guilty and deeply polluted in thy sight.

Yet still, O Lord, though I have sinned, I have an advocate with thee, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins. O grant me faith in him, that I may be justified freely by thy grace, through his redemption; be accepted in that beloved Son; and be a partaker of his Spirit.

Lord, make me hate and lothe every iniquity. Strengthen me to resist every temptation. Give me grace to put my whole trust in thee, to love thee supremely and constantly, to honor thy holy name, and to serve thee truly all the days of my life. Teach me to do thy will, O my God, and let thy good Spirit lead me into the land of uprightness. Give me grace to love my neighbor as myself, to reverence my superiors, to hurt no one, to be temperate and chaste. Let me not be slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

Lord, hast thou not said, when the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst; I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them? O Lord, I am poor and needy, and my soul thirsteth for thee. Hear me, let me drink of the waters

of life—never leave me, nor forsake me. Let me find thee, and live in thy presence, where alone is fullness of joy.

Grant, Lord of all power and love, that thy glory may be revealed to the heathen, and that all flesh may see it together. Lift up the light of thy countenance upon thy people. Build up the waste places of Sion. Send laborers into thy vineyard.

Bless all in authority, the Ministers of thy Gospel, and all the people. Impart thy mercy and grace to my dear relations, to all who pray for me, and all for whom I ought to pray. Be gracious to those in distress. Grant to mine enemies, if I have any, thy pardoning mercy and sanctifying Spirit, and reward seven-fold into their bosom those from I have received benefits and kindness.

Lord God of my salvation, every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and of great mercy. Thou keepest me from day to day in safety, and hast blessed me with innumerable mercies.

I thank thee for every prayer heard and answered, and for every good received. But thou hast commended thy love above all, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. He shed his blood for me; and how can I love, and praise, and serve thee as I ought! O help me to live in all things to thy glory, for the only sake of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior.

Our Father, &c.

[As some may be desirous to give the whole time of midday prayer to intercession, the following intercessory prayer is added.]

INTERCESSORY PRAYER AT NOON.

Almighty Father who would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, permit me now to approach thee, through Jesus Christ, in behalf of all those for whom I ought to pray.

Lord, bless thy church throughout the world. Let the glory of the Lord rise upon it in every place. I humbly pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Grant that

they that believe in him may stand fast, in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel, and send them now prosperity.

Bless that particular branch of thy church to which I belong. May it continue to be favored with the advantages which it now enjoys. God of all grace, grant that thy ministering servants in all the earth may be dead to the world and alive to Christ, and faithfully and continually preach the doctrines of his salvation. If any preach themselves, and not the Lord Jesus Christ, O God, change thou their hearts, show them their danger, teach them thy truth, and enable them to proclaim it to others. Give wisdom, grace, and every blessing, to that minister from whom I hear thy word.

And I pray thee, great Lord of the harvest, who seest and knowest all men, and hast the hearts of all in thy control, bless all Universities, Seminaries, and Schools, that in them, the young may be trained up in the fear of God and the faith of Christ. Give thy Holy Spirit to all preparing for the ministry. Send forth into thy vineyard, both in our own country and in every land, men of an enlightened mind and a devout heart, men of patient perseverance, of firm resolution, of entire dedication of body and soul to their work, of a wise and sober judgment, and of unquenchable love to immortal souls.

Give thy blessing to all in authority, that they may use the means which thou hast given them in the spread of true religion. Lord, instruct our Magistrates, and teach our Senators wisdom, that judgment may run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. Grant that everywhere such men as Nehemiah and Daniel may be raised up to offices in the state—men who shall disinterestedly labor and pray for the advancement of righteousness, and truth, and peace.

Our national sins call indeed for judgment; but grant that mercy may rejoice over judgment, and grace abound over sin. Give us, I beseech thee, those temporal and spiritual blessings which we deserve not, for to thee belongeth mercies and forgiveness of sins.

Grant that the doctrine of Christ crucified may be everywhere preached. Let such as now are Christians in name only, being taught the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, seek the life and power of religion; may the Jews, hearing of

Christ Jesus, look unto him whom they have pierced, and mourn; and may the Gentiles be given to him. So let the earth be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

May such an effusion of thy Spirit be shed on all flesh, that every tongue may joyfully sing the angelic song, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men."

Bestow thy grace abundantly on my brethren and kinsmen, according to the flesh, my parents, brothers, and sisters, and all my relatives, my servants, my Christian friends, neighbors, and connexions. If any hate or revile me, Lord, teach me to bless them—If any despitefully use me or persecute me, I now pray to thee in their behalf. Father, forgive them, and do them good.

Look on the destitute and afflicted; let their afflictions lead them to thee, that they may find God their refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble; and though the chastening be grievous, may they experience that it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

Finally, O Lord God, quicken all those that are dead in trespasses and sins; grant that those beginning to know the truth may follow on to know the Lord, those that are weak in faith may wax strong, those that have backslidden may be healed, those that are strong may be confirmed more and more, and go from strength to strength till they appear in Sion. Thanks be to thee for all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear. Shortly accomplish the number of thine elect, and hasten thy kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.*

PRIVATE EVENING PRAYER.

Gracious and merciful God, slow to anger, great in power, and rich in mercy to all them that call upon thee, help me now so, in the name of Christ, to ask, that I may have; and so to seek that I may find.

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* Some have found it advantageous to give particular days for particular parts of intercession, as follows:—SUNDAY, Ministers and Christian Congregations.—MONDAY, Family.—TUESDAY, relations, friends, and enemies.—WEDNESDAY, our Country.—THURSDAY, Benevolent and Religious Societies.—FRIDAY, The Church throughout the world.—SATURDAY, Jews, Gentiles, and unconverted persons.

Enter not into judgment with me, O Lord, for in thy sight I cannot be justified. However unblamable I may appear before men, before Him who knows the heart I confess and would mourn over innumerable sins in the past day, and in every day of my life.

I acknowledge with shame and sorrow my hypocrisy and pride, my vanity and selfishness, my unbelief and impatience, my self-indulgence and self-righteousness, my obstinacy and self-will, my disregard of thy law and thy glory, my living to myself and not to thee. And, O how hard is my heart, that feels so little the guilt and the evil of so many and such great sins!

Lord of all power and might, soften and break this hard heart. Give me a contrite spirit. There is mercy with thee. There is forgiveness with thee. O may thy great mercy be displayed towards me, in pardoning all my sins, and in renewing my soul. Give me patience, faith, and self-denial. Bestow on me the graces of sincerity, humility, and love.

May the love of Christ be more known and felt by me, and let it constrain me to live not to myself, but to him that died for me. Grant me thy Holy Spirit, teaching those things of which I am ignorant, taking of the things of Christ to show them unto me, and daily sanctifying my heart.

I ask for heavenly wisdom, holy simplicity, ardent zeal, and purity of heart. Incline me to study to be quiet, and to do my own business, and to work with my own hands. Prepare me, day by day, more and more, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Make me meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.

I commend myself to thy care during the night. May I lay down at peace with thee, through Christ, and in peace with all the world.

O Lord, though I be unworthy through my manifold transgressions to approach thee at all, yet thou hast commanded that intercessions be made for all men; hear me, therefore, unworthy though I be, in behalf of all that need my prayers. May the Lord comfort his people, and have mercy upon his afflicted. Let all nations whom thou hast made come and worship before thee and glorify thy name. Let every obstacle which may hinder the progress of thy truth be removed in mercy. Bless all the members of the

Church of Christ, and all his ministers, and especially those with whom I am more intimately connected.

Give to my parents, my brothers, my sisters, and my relatives, all those temporal and spiritual blessings of which they stand in need. Bless my superiors, my companions, and all about me. Continue the blessing of peace to my country. Pardon any who may have injured me; and if I have injured any, may I be ready to confess my fault, and to make restitution for any wrong done, and may they be disposed to forgive me.

I would not, O thou gracious giver of every good, close my evening prayer, without offering up, through Christ Jesus, my sincerest thanksgiving for all the mercies of the past day. For any help vouchsafed in my duties; for any stand which I may have been enabled to make against sin, Satan, and the world; for any measure of light, knowledge, or grace, given unto me, all praise, all glory be to thee. If I am still kept in thy way, and yet spared from that ruin which I have deserved, while I live, let me praise and bless thee.

How great is the sum of thy mercies! When I look back on thy past blessings, when I read thy promises relating to that which is to come, and when I look around me on every side, and especially when I regard that cross on which thy Son died for sinners, I would say from the heart, My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord, and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever. Amen and Amen.

Hear me, for the only sake of Jesus Christ.

Our Father, &c.

ANOTHER PRIVATE EVENING PRAYER.

Almighty God, Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, according to thy gracious promise, give me thy Holy Spirit, to help my infirmities, and enable me, in the name, and through the mediation of thy Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, to call upon thee.

Great is thy goodness to us sinners, in that we, who have grievously offended thee, have such a mediator, who ever liveth to make intercession for us. Without a Savior I can have no hope; for I have sinned against thee, and done evil in thy sight day by day.

I confess and mourn before thee the manifold sins of the

past day.* I daily offend thee by pride, impenitence, hardness of heart, unbelief, and forgetfulness of thee, and in many other ways: leaving undone the things which I ought to have done, and doing those which I ought not.

Lord, let thy Holy Spirit convince me of my sinfulness. I pray that I may see more of the extent of my iniquities, and feel more of their guilt. Thus may I be led to hate sin, and to feel the need and value of that Savior who came to seek and to save that which was lost. Grant that I may be a partaker of His great salvation. Whatever else I lose, may I win Christ, and be found in him.

Lord, I am unclean; if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. I believe that thou art able, I believe that thou art willing. Lord, help my unbelief; Lord, make me clean.

Give me, I beseech thee, such a sense of thy mercy in free forgiveness, through the blood of Christ, that I may be constrained to present my body a living sacrifice unto thee. Enable me daily to crucify the lusts of the flesh. Give me such a measure of thy grace, that all the powers of my mind, all the affections of my heart, all the members of my body, and all the talents intrusted to me, may be unreservedly engaged for thee. Lord, incline me to spend myself and be spent for thee: strengthen my desire to do so, and enable me ever hereafter to bring this desire to good effect.

Let the number of thy willing and devoted servants be everywhere increased. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, and thy glory above all the earth. Pour out thy Spirit upon all flesh, that all the ends of the earth may remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations may worship before thee. Let thy great name, now so little known, and so much profaned, be magnified and sanctified in every country and by every tongue.

Bless the land in which I dwell: its government, the ministers of Jesus Christ, and all its people. May we be a people fearing God and working righteousness. Look with thine especial favor on my relatives and friends, my family connexions and acquaintance. May they all be partakers of the grace of Christ here, and of his glory hereafter.

I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth. O my soul, and all that is with-

* Here state those sins of which your conscience accuses you.

in me, bless his holy name; bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. How great and how numerous they are!

Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits. All the temporal mercies granted so abundantly to me, my food, my clothing, my home, my friends, the daily provisions for my various necessities, these are from thee, who openest thy hand and fillest all things living with plenteousness. But, above all, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

These prayers and praises I offer up in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of perishing sinners: trusting only in his mediation and merits. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

PRAYER BEFORE THE LORD'S SUPPER.

O Thou, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, I approach thee as my God and my Father, through thy Son, our Savior and intercessor.

Invited to partake of the memorial of his dying love, and to join thy people in remembering him, I come to thee for the gift of all dispositions suitable to a service so solemn and so affecting.

Deliver me, I beseech thee, from all careless, vain, and trifling thoughts; let me lay aside the world and its vanities; let me renounce all self-righteousness and superstitions, and come as an humble penitent, expecting to discover fresh views of my Savior's glory and goodness, and to receive from him fresh strength to glorify his name.

O Lord, thou hast warned me against eating this bread, and drinking this cup unworthily. God of mercy preserve me from so great a sin. Thou hast directed, Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup; I beseech thee, incline and enable me to examine myself, to inquire into my motives in coming, to look back on my life, and to compare my thoughts, words, and works, with thy holy law.

If I have wronged others, Lord, dispose and assist me to

make reparation. Wherein I have offended thee, give me that godly sorrow that works repentance unto salvation. Let thy Holy Spirit convince me of my fallen and guilty state before thee. Take away the heart of stone, and give me the heart of flesh—the broken and contrite spirit. And O grant unto me full purpose of heart to forsake every sin, whatever it may cost me; however habitual it may have become. Search thou me, O Lord, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me into the way everlasting.

Let the conviction of my exceeding sinfulness lead me cordially and gratefully to accept my Savior's gracious invitations, and come weary and heavily laden unto him. May I go to thy table mourning for sin, and hungering and thirsting after righteousness, believing in Christ as my only hope and refuge, grateful for all thy mercies, and with a heart full of love to thee and all mankind.

Lord, I implore thy special grace at this solemn ordinance. In the breaking of bread, help me, by a living faith, to view Christ's body broken for me; and in the pouring out of the wine, his blood shed for me. May I thus learn to feel more of the evil of sin, and more of the love of Christ. Help me wisely, believingly, and gratefully to discern the Lord's body; and may it be as living food to my soul, so that now resting on the atonement of Christ, my Lord, I may rejoice and be glad in his great salvation. May he thus be evidently set forth crucified before me, and may I enjoy the communion of his body and his blood.

Gracious Lord, I beseech thee, enable me, when I receive the bread, by a lively faith to realize the blessed truth, that Christ died for sinners, even for me; and when I drink the wine, to believe according to his own word, that his blood was shed for many for the remission of sins. May I then afresh give myself wholly to thee, to be entirely thine, in life, in death, and through eternity; renewing all my solemn vows of obedience, and receiving fresh strength to carry them into effect.

Grant also unto all that shall meet with me around thy table the same blessings. Let our hearts be drawn near to each other. Give us to enter into the privilege of the communion of saints; and may we know that, though many, we are one body, and all partakers of that one bread, the iving and true bread that came down from heaven

O Lord, may we and all thy people thus assembling in thine earthly courts, be made more and more meet for thy heavenly mansions, and at length come to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; may we meet again there, where faith shall be lost in sight, and hope in full enjoyment, and love for ever fill all our souls, through Jesus Christ, our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

PRAYER AFTER THE LORD'S SUPPER.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Help me, holy Lord, coming now to thee in secret, gratefully to pour out my soul before thee.

O thou who dwellest in the high and holy place, whose name is holy, I feel that I infinitely need pardon for the sins of my holiest services. If thou, Lord, be extreme to mark what has been amiss, I cannot stand before thee; I have cause to mourn the wanderings of my heart, the dullness of my affections, the weakness of my faith, and the slightness of my repentance, even at thy table, with all the solemnities of the memorials of my Savior's death around me, and amid the assembly of thy saints.

But while I mourn my own sinfulness, yet still help me to magnify thy wonderful grace. Blessed be thou who put it into my heart to assemble with thy people.

Great is the privilege thus to meet among them here below, to participate in their prayers, and to join in their praises.—Thanks be unto thee for that manifestation of thy love which this ordinance brought before me. O how consoling the truth to such a sinner as I am, that Jesus died for the ungodly, that he receiveth sinners and eateth with them!

Giver of all grace, if I enjoyed any feelings of love to thee, any desires after thy salvation, any thing of communion with thee; if my hope were at all enlivened, my faith at all strengthened, my heart at all enlarged, all praise and glory be to thee. I would not deny thy answers to my prayer; I would not refuse to acknowledge the work of thy Spirit on my soul; but rather, in this thy goodness, find fresh motives to love and to serve thee. Forgive me all that was wrong. Accept, through the mediation of Jesus, all that thy grace enabled me to do according to thv will.

Teach me to feel that I am under fresh obligations to all holy obedience. May the solid and delightful joys of peace with God, the pardon of sins, free justification, and the hope of glory, make the sinful pleasures of the world for ever insipid and vain. Having seen and tasted how good the Lord is, may I never turn back again to folly.

O Lord, now it is I need thy strength. Now grant me thy Holy Spirit, continually to bring to my remembrance the solemn transactions of this day. May the recollection of them long remain, filling me with a holy fear of offending thee, an ardent love to my Savior, and influencing me to devote my body, soul, and substance, all I am, and all I have, wholly to thee.

Lord, now grant that my evil tempers may at length be subdued: that the flesh with its affections and lusts may, through thy Spirit, at length be mortified; that Christ may now dwell in my heart by faith: and that, strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, I may fulfil in my life all the solemn vows and resolutions that have been afresh renewed this day in thy presence.

Yes, gracious God, let me never cease striving to serve thee; let me never, while the world tempts, and sin dwells in me, and Satan opposes, give over the contest; let me never rest short of thy great salvation. O thou good Shepherd, who laid down thy life for thy sheep, let me never perish, neither let any pluck me out of thy hand; till at length, with all thine elect, I come to occupy thy fold above.

Hear me, gracious Father; hear and answer, for Christ's sake. Amen.

MORNING FAMILY PRAYER.

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, who hast said that thou wilt be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be thy people; dispose our hearts, by the gracious influence of thy Holy Spirit, to worship thee through one Mediator, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Adoration.

[*Thou art God, and there is none beside thee: the

* The parts in brackets can be left out, if it is wished to shorten the prayers.

Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord of glory, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgressions, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty. We bow and worship at thy footstool; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.]

Thanksgiving.

Accept, through thy Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, our unfeigned thanksgivings for the mercies of another day. Thou gavest us our being, and thou preservest us from day to day. Through the defenceless hours of the night thou hast kept us in safety. Thou hast given us a soul capable of knowing and rejoicing in thee, and a body by which we may serve thee.

[We bless thee for the seeing eye, and the hearing ear, for the free use of our limbs and our senses, for the power of the mind, and the affections of the heart.]

But, O Lord, we thank thee most of all for thy spiritual blessings. We bless thee that we were not born in heathen lands, but in this favored country, where the light of thy truth clearly shines. We thank thee for the comfort of the Holy Scriptures, for the labors of faithful ministers, and for all the means of grace. O how great has been thy love to us! Thou sparedst not thine own Son, but deliveredst him up for us all, and with him thou hast freely given us all things.

[We are invited to come to thee; though we be guilty and sinful, we are freely offered pardon, peace, and salvation; and thou givest us a hope full of immortality in Christ Jesus our Savior.]

Dedication.

[What reward shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits? We desire now afresh to devote ourselves to thy service. We give up ourselves, our whole selves unto thee. God of peace, sanctify us wholly. God of our life, grant that our whole spirit, and soul, and body, may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.]

Confession.

But with shame and confusion of face, we would confess that we have been rebellious and disobedient. Thou

art holy, but we are unholy. Thou art merciful, but we have often been selfish and unkind. Thou art pure, but we are impure. Thou art patient, but we are impatient. We have abused all thy gifts, and made them occasions of sin. Lord, we acknowledge our impenitence, we confess our unbelief, we bewail our self-righteousness.

Petition.

Forgive us all our offences, remember not against us our transgressions, but remember thy great and tender mercies which have been ever of old. Grant unto every one of us a saving interest in the death of Christ, full and free forgiveness of all our sins, and grace and strength to go and sin no more. Lord, help us to love thee, teach us to serve thee. Give us thy strength that we may overcome our corrupt nature. Grant that this day we may have power from on high to resist every temptation, to confess Christ before men, to labor stedfastly with a single eye to thy glory, to live in the spirit of prayer, in faith, humility, self-denial, and love, and to walk before thee in that narrow way which leads to eternal life. Fill us with love to others. Teach us to do good to all men, [and to seek according to our means to visit and relieve the fatherless and the widows in their affliction:] and do thou keep us unspotted from the world.

Pleading.

[Lord, for thy name's sake, hear us. We beseech thee, according to thy infinite mercy, give us grace to serve thee, constantly and unfeignedly. Herein art thou glorified, that we bear much fruit. For thine own glory, grant us thy Spirit, that we may bring forth all the fruits of righteousness.]

Intercession.

And hear us farther in behalf of our relations and friends, our neighborhood, our Minister, and all for whom we ought to pray. Help those that are weak. Comfort those that are cast down. Heal those that are sick. Relieve those that are in distress. Be merciful unto thy Church. O bless us, and cause thy face to shine upon us, that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Bring the Gentiles to Christ. Gather thy people Israel in

thy fold.—Give wisdom and power to every effort of Christian love for spreading thy Gospel. Bless all societies formed for this end, and let those who support and conduct them have thy direction and guidance. Lord, grant that the power of the cross of Christ, may at length fully triumph over all error and superstition, all idolatry, and delusion, and sin.

Gracious Lord, not for our worthiness, but for the on y name's sake of Jesus Christ, hear these our prayers which we sum up in his own words.

Our Father, &c.

ANOTHER MORNING FAMILY PRAYER.

Almighty God, source of every good, and fountain of every blessing, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him our God and Father, give us the Spirit of adoption, and enable us to cry, Abba, Father. Help us to come and pour out our hearts before thee with the same confidence and affection with which children go to an earthly parent. Enable us to repose on thy love, to tell thee all our desires, and all our sorrows; and, from the heart, to thank thee for all thy goodness to us.

Great and abundant cause we have to bless our God for all that he is in himself, and for all that he is to us. Thy mercies are new every morning. We thank thee that we meet together in peace and safety. Thou hast been our defence and our refuge. Let then the outgoings of the morning and of the evening praise thee.

We thank thee more especially for all the mercies of redemption. In the Gospel of Christ, mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other. Thus can even we rejoice in thy power and justice, thy holiness, mercy, and love; and bless thee that the light of the knowledge of this thy glory shines, in the hearts of thy people, in the face of Jesus Christ. Blessed be tho the just God and the Savior.

O how unworthy we are of the least of thy mercies! We are all sinful and guilty. We have turned every one to his own way. We would give thee glory by an ingenuous and free confession that in many things we have all offended thee. From our youth up, even till now, we have been in a great trespass.

We dare not justify ourselves in thy sight, for if we should attempt it, even our own mouths would condemn us. We have omitted to perform many plain duties. We have done many things for which our consciences justly accuse us. All our righteousnesses are defiled. All our prayers and services are polluted.

[Yet spare us, good Lord, spare us, according to thy great compassion and thy tender mercy. Lord God of our salvation, it is thy gracious promise, on which our souls rely, that if we confess our sins, thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We now confess our sins, and we ask that we may be forgiven, and that our souls may be purified from sin. We plead thy justice, for Jesus bore our sins in his own body on the tree. We plead thy faithfulness according to thy many precious promises. Lot us now by faith obtain those promises.]

Cleanse, we beseech thee, the thoughts of our hearts, by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name. Strengthen us for the duties of this day. Suffer us not to be tempted above what we are able to bear; but with every temptation make a way to escape. Incline and enable us to walk in that way.

Hold thou up our goings in thy paths, that our footsteps slip not. Set a watch before our mouths, and keep the door of our lips, that we offend not with our tongue. May we always speak that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers. Enable us also to keep our hearts with all diligence, seeing that out of it are the issues of life. Increase our faith, enliven our hope, and enlarge our charity, that we may faithfully serve thee, and in all things glorify thy holy name.

We pray for all our relatives and friends. Give them prosperity both of body and soul.* Grant that grace and

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* When any member of the family is sick, add—

We particularly commend unto thee that member of our family now in affliction; may faith, patience, submission and resignation be granted in this hour of trial, and in thy own good time remove the affliction. And, Lord, grant that all our tribulations here below may lead us to look at the things which are above, and work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Ever give us a spirit of sympathy, and tender feeling, and love for each other; and

peace may be multiplied to all those that call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours. Seek and save the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Let the light of life shine into every benighted heart. Increase especially among the people of this nation, the number of those who know, and love, and serve thee. Bless our rulers, and guide our statesmen; teach thy ministers, and prosper thy people, that there may be no complaining in our streets; and that it may be said of us, "Happy is the people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

These prayers we offer up in the name and through the mediation of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Our Father, &c.

EVENING FAMILY PRAYER.

O eternal God, whose name is love, and so loved the world that thou gavest thine only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life, help us, by the Holy Spirit, to believe in Christ Jesus; and trusting in him to have access unto thee.

We feel our need of a Savior for sinners; for we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. When we look back even on the past day, thy law accuses us of many sins, and our own consciences justly condemn us. We have been forgetful of thy presence; our conversation has been light and trifling; and we have not with a single eye sought thy glory, or copied the holy life of our Savior Christ. He left us a perfect example, but how seldom we tread in his steps; how little have we of his meekness and lowliness of heart, of his zeal and love! We have sinned, notwithstanding the light of thy word, and the checks of our own consciences.

Grant us thy grace, that we may not be hardened through

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may we always be ready to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice.

When any member of the family is on a journey, add—

O Lord, we beseech thee, regard with thy favor, protect and defend *him* who is now absent from us. Take *him* under thy special care. Preserve *him* from every temptation. Prosper *him* in *his* undertakings. May *he* be a blessing wherever *he* goes; and bring *him* in health and peace among us again, that we may together have fresh cause to praise and bless thy holy name.

the deceitfulness of sin. Give us true repentance, and such a sense of our sinfulness as may lead us to despair of salvation by any works of our own; and bring us humbled and penitent to the foot of the cross. Help us by faith to behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Teach us to renounce our own righteousness, and to depend wholly on Jesus Christ. May we be able to say and feel, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength."

[Teach us to come to Jesus Christ, and how to look to him, not only for pardon and peace, but also for grace and strength. We are weak, but Jesus is strong: grant that we may be made strong in and through him. Draw us to Christ, that we may receive out of his fullness all that we need, repentance, remission of sins, and the gift of thy Holy Spirit; that he may dwell in our hearts by faith, and we be rooted and grounded in love.]

We commend ourselves to thy care during the night. Let no evil come nigh us. May our last thoughts be with thee; and when we awake up, may we be still with thee. Refresh our bodies with the quiet repose of the night, and renew our spiritual strength. Teach us ever to watch and pray, and to be always ready, seeing we know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man shall come.

Extend thy merciful care to all that are near and dear to us. We pray for all our relatives. May those that are endeared to us by the ties of nature, be yet more dear by the stronger bonds of grace. Grant that we may be all one in Christ Jesus our Lord. We pray for our Christian friends, for our neighbors, and all with whom we have intercourse.

Bless those that minister before the Lord. May all Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, be faithful, wise, humble, and devoted servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. Everywhere raise up pastors according to thine heart, which shall feed thy people with knowledge and understanding. Grant thy blessing to every Missionary now preaching Christ to the Gentiles. Cause Jew and Gentile to turn to the Lord, that they may be saved. Bring on the happy day, when there shall be one fold and one Shepherd; and they shall not hurt, nor destroy in all thy holy mountain.

O thou giver of every good and perfect gift, we praise and bless thee for thy great and continued mercies to us. All things thou givest to us richly for enjoyment. We

ceive from thee full provision for all our temporal wants, and thou forgivest our iniquities.

[Like as a father pitieth his children, so thou our Lord and Father pitiest them that fear thee. Thou knowest our frame; thou rememberest that we are dust. Thou hast had compassion on us in our low and lost estate, and thou gavest thy Son to die for us; and now thou offerest and givest us thy Holy Spirit, to soften our hard hearts and to help our infirmities. Thou justifiest us freely by thy grace, adoptest us into thy family, and givest us a hope full of glory.]

Behold what manner of love thou our Father hast bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! God of mercy, grant, only grant that we may be followers of thee as dear children, and show forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, through Jesus Christ.

And now blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

The Lord bless us, and keep us.

The Lord make his face to shine upon us, and be gracious unto us.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon us, and give us peace.

ANOTHER EVENING FAMILY PRAYER.

O Thou, who art the God of all the families of the earth, who didst favorably notice Abraham's commanding his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord; be thou present with us now, and enable us by thy Holy Spirit, and through thy Son's intercession, to worship thee in spirit and in truth.

We come before thee acknowledging that we were all born in sin, the children of wrath, and have in common a corrupt nature and a continual propensity to depart from thee. And O how often have we offended thee, the God of all the earth, by actual transgressions.

Even in the day that is past, by vain thoughts, by idle words, by sinful indulgences, we have grieved thy Spirit, and we have incurred thy displeasure. Our only refuge is in thy promised mercy in Christ Jesus. We cast ourselves

wholly on that mercy. Fixing all our hopes on our Savior Jesus, we confess our guilt, and earnestly pray that his blood may cleanse us from all sin.

And give us, we beseech thee, the comfortable assurance that our sins are forgiven. Let thy Holy Spirit bear witness with our spirits that we are children of God. Plentifully impart to us the gift of thy Spirit, that we may bring forth love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance, and temperance. Grant that we may so copy the example of our Savior, as to be the Epistles of Christ, known and read of all men; and have clear evidence of our own salvation. Teach us so to live, that we may glorify thee who hast bought us with a price of such amazing value as the blood of thine own Son.

O that all now kneeling together may indeed obtain mercy in Christ Jesus, be passed from death unto life, and love and serve thee unfeignedly. But, O Lord, how cold is our love to thee! how dead, how dull are our hearts! Help us to love thee; to love God with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength. Shed abroad the love of God in our hearts, by giving us the Holy Ghost; and may we be taught of God to love one another. Be thou present with us in our more retired devotions: praying to our Father which is in secret in our closet, may we find his presence and blessing there.

Bless, O Lord, all that are near and dear to us. Many beloved relatives and friends are now absent from us; but thou art with them, and all their wants are known to thee. Give them thy grace; ever guide them here by thy counsel. and may none of them be wanting in thy heavenly kingdom.

We pray for all in authority; Lord, may their counsels be ordered by thee as may be most for the good of our Country.

Give we beseech thee, to all Bishops, Priests, Deacons and ministers of Jesus Christ everywhere, true knowledge and understanding of thy word; and may they set it forth in their lives accordingly. Make them wise to win souls. Lord, call forth and send out many faithful laborers to the work of the ministry. Bring it to pass that the distant isles shall wait on thee, and the Gentiles come to thy light. Bless every Society established for benefiting

the bodies or the souls of men, and especially those in which we are more immediately engaged and interested.

Thanks be unto thee, holy Lord God, for all thy goodness towards us. How multiplied are thy mercies every day! How excellent is thy loving kindness! We bless thee for all thy long-suffering and forbearance towards us. We bless thee for the infinite mercies of redeeming love. We bless thee for the knowledge of thy salvation, and, for the light of thy truth: for protection from every danger during the night, and provision for all our wants by day. Thou hast spread our table with food, and thou givest us every needful good. Accept these our prayers and our praises, which we offer up in and through Jesus Christ, our only mediator and advocate. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

FAMILY PRAYER, SUNDAY MORNING.

O Almighty God, Creator, Governor, and Upholder of all things, who after making the heaven and earth, didst rest on the seventh day, and bless and sanctify it, teach us now, resting from our worldly labors, to devote the day to thy service. O thou whose Son did, as on this day, rise again from the dead, grant us grace to rise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. Help us now, in his name, to seek thy blessing on those holy duties to which the sabbath is set apart.

We bless and praise thee for the appointment of this day, and for all the means of grace which we enjoy in this highly favored land. We bless thee that thy house is open, that thy ministers have liberty to preach, and we have opportunity and inclination to assemble with thy people and hear thy holy word.

Above all, we thank thee for the knowledge of Jesus Christ; for free justification and salvation through his life, death, and resurrection. We praise thee for the gift of thy Holy Spirit. Blessed for ever blessed, be thou, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for all these thy benefits.

Great have been thy mercies to us; but with shame we confess that we have slighted thy goodness, and carelessly regarded thy great salvation. How many sabbaths have we broken; how many invitations of mercy have we neglected; how many warnings and threatenings have we trifled with!

How cold have been our prayers; how great our irreverence; how inexcusable our unbelief!

Forgive us, O forgive us, all our negligences and infirmities, and all our sins and iniquities. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him. Return again, and bless us. Graciously be present with us, through all the solemn services of this day. Enable us to go to thy house in the spirit of prayer. Pour out upon us, and all that shall meet in thy name, the spirit of grace and supplication. Let none of us draw near to thee with our lips only, while our hearts are far from thee; but enable us to worship thee in spirit and in truth. Cause thy face to shine upon us. Grant that we may find that the Lord is in his holy Temple, and be able to say, It was good for us to have been there! Prepare our hearts to receive thy holy word, that it may be sown in good ground, and bring much fruit to perfection.

[Bless especially such of us as hope this day again to receive the memorials of our Savior's sufferings and death. May contrition, penitence, faith, humility, and love, be in lively exercise, and be greatly increased.]

Help all of us, not only to abstain from engaging in our usual business and occupation, but also keep us from worldly conversation and from vain thoughts. Raise our affections to things above, and let our conversation be in heaven. Enable us to give this day to reading and hearing thy word, to meditation, self-examination, and prayer; and be thou with us, to bless us in our retired devotions.

And, Father of mercies, we beseech thee to bless all that minister in holy things. Multiply unto them thy grace, that they may be faithful, diligent, and laborious. Grant them humility, disinterestedness, watchfulness, and zeal; may all have grace to take heed to themselves and to the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made them overseers, feeding the Church of God which he has purchased with his own blood. Stand by and strengthen them this day. Open thou their mouths, and enable them to testify boldly the Gospel of the grace of God. We especially pray for him who ministers among us. May he this day be enabled to speak a word in season to us, and to all that hear him.

And, we beseech thee, grant that this thy sabbath may be distinguished by great and singular mercies to thy

church. Be thou with all Christian congregations meeting to worship thee. By the ministry of thy word this day, convert many sinners; heal those that have backslidden, strengthen those that are weak, and confirm those that are strong. Give thy holy word free course, and let it be glorified in every land, and among every people. Hear us, and answer us, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

FAMILY PRAYER, SUNDAY EVENING.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and art to come! Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; thou chargest thine angels with folly, and in thy sight the heavens are not clean; we approach thee, then, only in the name of Jesus Christ.

We confess, O Lord, how defective and defiled all our services are. We acknowledge that our prayers are full of distractions. Our confessions want confessing over again, our very petitions need thy pardon, our cold intercessions for others increase our own guilt, and our unworthy thanksgivings fall utterly short of thy great goodness to us. We carelessly and unbelievingly hear thy word. All we do is polluted and sinful. O forgive us. Forgive the sins of solemn duties; and let that great High Priest, who is passed into the heavens, bearing the iniquities of our holy things, plead for us in thy sight.

And grant, most merciful Lord, that it may not be in vain that we enjoy such distinguished privileges as thou hast given to us, lest it be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for us. Let not the seed of the word of God which has this day been sown in our hearts, be plucked away by Satan, lost through temptation, or choked with the cares of this life; but having heard it and received it, incline us to keep it, and do thou cause it to bring forth fruit, an hundred fold.

Grant that our lives may exhibit whose we are and whom we serve: remembering that if we know our Lord's will and do it not, we shall justly have the severer punishment; we humbly beseech thee, strengthen our resolutions to live more decidedly to thee. We feel that we now have again to enter into the contest with our spiritual enemies; make us more than conquerors through him that loved us.

We have again to exert ourselves to run the race set before us; teach us ever to look unto Jesus as the author and finisher of our faith. O let us take the more earnest heed never to let slip the things which we have heard.

And we pray for all those who have this day assembled before thee, and heard the word of salvation. Grant unto them the same mercies which we ask for ourselves. Let thy ministers that water others be themselves abundantly watered in their own soul. Strengthen them for thy work, both in body and soul.

Remember in mercy those who by thy providence have been kept from thy house, and let them receive a special supply of thy grace. Grant that those who have wilfully or ignorantly deprived themselves of public worship may have their eyes opened to see, and their hearts awakened to feel, their guilt and their danger, and learn to flee from the wrath to come.—O hasten the time when thy house shall be a house of prayer for all nations, and the whole world shall worship in thy courts.

Thanks be unto God for all the privileges of the past Sabbath. Blessed be thy name that we were permitted to hear thy word, to join thy people in prayer and praise, and to enjoy so plentifully the means of grace. Blessed be our God for any thing of communion with him, or desire after him. Blessed be God, if the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, or his holy word, be more understood or valued by us. Our cup runneth over with mercies.

O Lord, if, amid our infirmities, thy Sabbaths here below rejoice the heart; if to rest from earthly labors, and enjoy the privileges of thy house in this world, be delightful; how should we thank thee for the prospect of an eternal Sabbath, where thy servants shall serve thee without one wandering thought, without weariness, and without distraction! O grant, in mercy grant, that none of those who have this day met together in thy house, may be wanting in the number of those who shall dwell in that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

BRIEF PRAYER FOR A SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Gracious Savior, who hast said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, regard with thy favor,

every effort to bring up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Give, holy Lord, we beseech thee, wisdom and discretion, patience, kindness, and perseverance to all who conduct schools. Bless those who endeavor to instruct the young. Do thou teach them that they may teach others.

Heavenly Father, grant that the children of this school may receive with an humble, teachable, and ready mind, all the instructions given to them according to thy word. Give them thy grace while young, that early seeking Jesus their Savior, they may find him. Let them remember their Creator in the days of their youth. Teach them to honor their parents and superiors, and to be kind and full of love towards each other. God grant that they may all be trained up in the way in which they should go, and when they are old never depart from it.—May the knowledge of the Lord be universally diffused, till at length all shall know thee from the least to the greatest, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

BRIEF PRAYER FOR A BENEVOLENT SOCIETY.

O thou who art the Father of the fatherless, and the Judge of the widow, who hast declared it to be pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, to visit the fatherless and the widow in their afflictions, bless all thy servants in any way engaged in supporting and carrying on this work of mercy and love. May those that have pity on the poor, find, by happy experience, that they have lent unto the Lord, and that he pays them again what they have given.

Help us to remember what a responsible duty is committed to our charge, rightly to divide and apportion those alms which have been intrusted to us, among those in real necessity; and give us grace to act wisely and faithfully.

In all our visits to the poor and afflicted, do thou go with us. Enable us to speak with them and act towards them, both in fidelity and in tenderness. With whatever difficulties, disappointments, or reproaches, we may meet, let us never be weary of well-doing. Enable us, in all things, patiently to follow his example who went about doing good.

Bless us and all men, in every endeavor to reclaim the

wicked, instruct the ignorant, comfort the mourner, and confirm the believer; and make true religion everywhere spread, till the earth be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A SOCIAL PRAYER.

[O Lord God Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord of Glory, who art greatly to be feared in the assembly of thy saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about thee; who dwellest in heaven, surrounded with Angels and Archangels, with Cherubim and Seraphim, who veil their faces while they praise and worship; we bow down before thee in the name of Jesus Christ. None other name, but the name of Jesus; none other merits, but the merits of Jesus, would we plead in thy sight: but by Him, through one Spirit, may we now have access with confidence to the throne of grace.]

O Thou whose name is Holy, who hast required that we confess our faults one to another; we would now confess our many and our great sins. We have often sinned against thee, and against each other, in thought, word, or deed. O forgive our hardness of heart, and our earthly mindedness; all our want of charity, all our hastiness of spirit, all our bad tempers, and every sinful action.

For thine own name's sake, blot out our transgressions, and remember not our sins. [We put thee in remembrance, and plead together thy gracious promises. We declare them before thee, that we may be justified. May the blood of Jesus purge our consciences from dead works to serve the living God.]

Lord of all grace, help us ever hereafter to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. May we, with all lowliness, and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Give us grace so to live, that we may find more and more how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

[Teach us to remember that to us there is one body and one spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all; and thus may we love each other as brethren. Help us to

love one another even as Christ has loved us. Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.]

Give unto each of us grace to fulfil our duties toward each other. As *parents*, may we bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and as *children*, obey our parents in all things; as *masters*, may we give unto our servants that which is just and equal, remembering that we also have a master in heaven; and as *servants*, be obedient in singleness of heart, as unto Christ; as *husbands*, loving our wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and dwelling with them according to knowledge; as *wives*, being in subjection to the husband, and having on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.

We ask for blessings on our native land. Lord, we would sigh before thee for all the abominations of our country. O how the swearer, the sabbath-breaker, the covetous, the licentious, and the blasphemer abound on every side! Because of these things the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience. Spare us, good Lord, spare us, for thy name's sake. Grant, we beseech thee, that as we have been peculiarly distinguished by thy mercies, so it may have to be said of us, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people, for what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for."

Pour out of thy Spirit on all who have the direction of public affairs; on all who minister in holy things; on the magistrates, and on the people; that a general revival of religion may appear among us. Cause thy Church everywhere to flourish and increase. We pray especially for an increase of the zeal, purity and love, humility and devotion of thy people. Let Zion break forth on the right hand and on the left. Add daily to thy Church, in our own country, and in heathen lands, such as shall be saved. Bless every Missionary gone forth to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and may more and more grace be given unto them all, that they may labor zealously wisely, and abundantly in thy cause.

And now, Lord, accept our unfeigned thanksgivings, for all those blessings which we daily so richly enjoy. We thank thee more especially for those many dear ties of relationship, affection, and Christian principles, which bind

us together. We bless thee for all that sympathy of feeling and union of heart which thou hast given us; and we pray that we may be more and more knit together in Christian love.

But, beyond all other mercies, we bless thee for the common salvation of Jesus Christ; for his birth, his life, his death, and his resurrection; for all that he was, and is, and will be. Blessed be God for the gift of his Son Jesus Christ, our only Savior, our only hope, and our sure refuge.

[We trust that we may say we are one in Christ, members of that body of which he is the head; and we bless and praise thee for this thy unspeakable mercy. We thank thee for this opportunity of assembling ourselves together; and we pray that however we may be separated here below, or however scattered in different stations, as we have now met together here on earth, we may hereafter all meet in heaven, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

PRAYER FOR THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

I.

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the God of the spirits of all flesh, the earth is thine, and the fullness thereof, the round world, and they that dwell therein.

We come, as sinners, but trusting in thy beloved Son, our Advocate, and the propitiation for our sins, and looking for the promised spirit of grace and supplication.

Lord, we confess before thee our own sins, and those of our country. Like thy people of old, while we have been greatly distinguished by privileges, we have also been a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters. We have forsaken the Lord, and have provoked the holy one of Israel. And chiefly, now, we would confess our coldness and indifference in extending the blessings of that glorious Gospel which Thou hast intrusted to us. How slothful and unconcerned have we been to communicate to others the privileges which we enjoy, and to use all the means which thou hast given unto us of imparting the knowledge of Christ to distant lands! To us belong shame and confusion of face, because we

have sinned against thee. But to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him.

We beseech thee, give us a zeal for thy glory. Fountain of light, and life, and grace, pour upon us thy quickening Spirit, to animate and excite us to devote ourselves to thee. Raise up, we pray thee, those who shall unceasingly pray, and give, and think, and labor, for the spread of thy truth. Revive the days of the primitive church, when thy people, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

May the true light come more and more to thy Church, and the glory of the Lord rise upon her; and may the Gentiles come to this light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

Lord, we plead the glory of thy great name, the faithfulness of thy promises, and the happiness of thine own creation; and with these pleas, we ask, that the heathen may be given to Christ for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.

II.

O Lord, hast thou not said, "It shall come to pass in the last days that I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh?" Behold! in these last days: give now to us that ask. With thee is the residue of the Spirit; and the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear.

Have respect unto the Covenant, for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. May the Sun of righteousness arise, with healing in his wings, on those people now sitting in darkness and the shadow of death.

We pray thee to hasten the coming on of that time, when it shall not be asked, Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? but it shall be said, The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the sight of all nations, and all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

And grant, gracious Lord, that while the fullness of the Gentiles is come in, all Israel may also be saved. May the veil which remains upon their hearts when Moses is read, be taken away by their turning to the Lord. May this

branch which has so long been broken off, at length be grafted into its own Olive-tree.

O let the Deliverer come out of Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

And while we thus pray, we thank thee, good and gracious Lord, for all the blessed signs of the times in which we live. We bless thee for the beginning of a general desire to spread thy truth through the world, and that societies have been raised in these latter days, among all denominations of thy servants, for evangelizing the heathen, and for their conversion from dumb idols to the living God. We thank thee for any success given to these efforts, and would thereby be encourged to persevere in more zealous labors, and more fervent prayers.

III.

O Father of lights, and giver of all wisdom, bless every Society formed for the conversion of Jews or Gentiles, and for the spread and advancement of thy truth, at home or abroad. Guide the minds of all who conduct their affairs. In all their difficulties and trials, comfort and support them. Especially direct them in the choice of fit instruments. Give them the discerning of spirits, that none may be sent forth but such as thou hast called, prepared, and qualified for the blessed yet arduous office of proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ. Greatly increase the number of such laborers. Give, O give thou the word, and great shall be the company of preachers. Bless all who support thy cause at home. May they that love thy Jerusalem prosper in body and soul: in endeavoring to water others, may their own souls be watered.

Look with thy favor on all missionaries now among the heathen. O prepare thy way in the wilderness. May every valley be exalted, every hill made low; may the crooked be made straight, and the rough places plain; and let thy word everywhere have free course and be glorified. May thy doctrine, constantly preached by thy servants, drop as the rain, and distil as the dew, and thy word never return unto thee void, but prosper abundantly, and accomplish all that for which thou dost send it. Give thy servants health and strength, vigor of mind. and devotedness of heart; and may they all be chosen vessels to bear thy name before the Gentiles. May the deadening influence of climate, heathen

customs, and loss of means of grace, be more than counteracted by a special supply of thy Holy Spirit. May it have to be recorded of each one of them—He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith; and much people were, through him, added to the Lord. Give them grace to be faithful unto death, and may they receive from the Savior's hands the crown of life and glory. Grant that thousands and tens of thousands may rise up to call them blessed. May the little leaven leaven the whole lump; and all the nations whom thou hast made fall down and worship before thee, and glorify thy name.

O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not for thine own sake, O our God. For thy dear Son's sake, answer. May he see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. Amen, and Amen.

Our Father, &c.

ANOTHER PRAYER FOR THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

I.

O Eternal God, the Lord of Glory, who hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched-out arm; the great, the mighty God, the Lord of Hosts is thy name: Thou, Lord, art good to all, and thy tender mercies are over all thy works. Thou art nigh unto all them that call upon thee, to all that call upon thee in truth.

We are bold, therefore, to come before thee in behalf of a world lying in wickedness. Behold, in thy infinite compassion, dying millions, who have changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts! behold them, without Christ, strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world; filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, and malignity! Lord, we know that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Regard then, now, we beseech thee, in pity, the sad effects of sin, the miserable condition of these thy creatures. Regard, we beseech thee, thine own glory. How long shall thy name be thus profaned? How long shall the prince of darkness usurp the Savior's promised inheritance and possession? Lord, how

long shall the blessed hope that the kingdoms of this world are to be the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ, tarry ere it come?

Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Sion, for the time to favor her, yea, the set time, is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof. So the Heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory.

Lord we believe thy promises; help our unbelief. We are persuaded that thou hast brought the wretched state of the world before the eyes of thy people, that they may pity millions of guilty, accountable, and immortal souls without the knowledge of a Savior; that while there is time they may pray, and give, and strive to make thy Gospel known among them. Our Savior has commanded, "Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature;" and thou hast promised, that thy word shall not return unto thee void; we confidently, therefore, ask thee to bless the cause of Christian missions, that it may advance and grow, and increase till every Christian heart become warmed with holy zeal for the spread of the Savior's name, and kingdom, and glory; and the Gospel of Christ be preached to Jew and Gentile through the world.

II.

Holy, holy, holy Lord, we acknowledge it to be owing to thy infinite mercy, that we were not left in the darkness of heathen lands. Thou didst incline thy servants of old to send faithful missionaries to preach thy glorious Gospel; thou didst support them in all their trials and difficulties, and at length this favored country became a Christian land. And, Lord, how hast thou since blessed us, above other nations, in the enjoyment of the light of thy truth, and in the power and means to communicate it! We feel that our privileges imply duties. Give us grace, then, to labor, that the word of the Lord may from us sound out in every place. We thank thee that thou hast given many the disposition to aid in this work, and that numbers of thy servants are united in societies, to send abroad the tidings of salvation. Lord, bless them all. Lord, greatly increase the number of such as have at heart the good of Sion.

We thank thee, O Lord, that thy holy word is translating into numerous different languages, and that now so many

nations may hear in their own tongues the wonderful works of God. Give yet greater success to these efforts. Facilitate this work by imparting, more and more, peculiar talents to those engaged therein. As thou didst give to thy servants of old peculiar skill in erecting the tabernacle in the wilderness, and the temple at Jerusalem, so in this age of thy Church do thou grant special gifts to those engaged in building up thy spiritual temple.

Lord, do thou prepare and call forth laborers. Qualify fit instruments to conduct missionary efforts, and give them faith, wisdom, and judgment, uprightness, patience, and self-denial, a single eye and a single heart, in all their proceedings. So incline their minds, that they may send none to labor among the heathen but those that are first chosen of thee: men anointed with the Holy Ghost. Do thou raise up meek, humble, patient, believing, laborious, and persevering men, counting their work their wages, and looking for the recompense of reward hereafter: men suited to the exigencies of the heathen, in their various degrees of civilization and knowledge, and adapted to meet their wants in each particular situation; men willing to spend themselves, and be spent for Christ. Lord, send forth, we beseech thee, send forth such laborers.

III.

Regard, we beseech thee, O Lord, with thy infinite love, those who have gone forth in thy name to Heathen lands, to labor in making Christ known to the Gentiles. Help them to be followers of thy Apostles. Grant that they may never lose that first love and ardor of mind which induced them, for Christ's sake, to leave country, home, friends, and relatives. Preserve them sound in doctrine, and pure in their life and conversation. In the faith of Christ may they vanquish the world, the flesh, and the Devil, and overcome apparently insurmountable difficulties. Give unto them utterance that they may open their mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel. Give them grace to hope even against hope; and in thy own good time remove every opposing obstacle to the universal diffusion of thy truth. Let the course of thy providence prepare the way for thy servants. Let every fresh advance, either in commerce, science, or arts, aid the coming on of the Redeemer's kingdom; all things work together for good, till all

shall know thee, the only true God, from the least to the greatest.

And for this we entreat the full out-pouring of thy Holy Spirit upon all flesh; upon kings of the earth and all people; upon bishops, priests, deacons, and all Christian ministers; upon princes, senators, and magistrates; young men and maidens, old men and children. Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is excellent, his glory is above the earth and heaven.

O Lord, it is not our glory we seek, but thine. We long, we ask, we pray, that thy will may be done on earth, as it is in heaven; that all nations whom thou hast made may come and worship before thee, and glorify thy name. Lord, thou knowest our desires: we know not how to express them as we should. Do for us and thy Church exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, for thy great name's sake. Amen.

These prayers we offer up in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

EJACULATORY PRAYERS FROM THE SCRIPTURES.

On rising in the morning.

I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for thou, Lord, sustained me. *Ps. iii.* 5.

At noon.

At evening, and at morning, and at noon-day will I pray, and that instantly. *Ps. lv.* 17.

On going to bed.

I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest, for it is thou, Lord, only that makest me to dwell in safety. *Ps. iv.* 8.

At going out.

Lord, bless my going out, and my coming in, from this time forth for evermore. *Ps. cxxi.* 8.

At work.

Prosper thou the work of my hands, O Lord: prosper my handy-work. *Ps. cx.* 17.

In conversation.

Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep thou the door of my lips. *Ps. cxli.* 3.

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer. *Ps. xix.* 14.

When evil entreated.

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. *Luke xxiii.* 34.

Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. *Acts vii.* 60.

On any loss.

The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. *Job i.* 21.

In temptation.

How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? *Gen. xxxix.* 9.

Lord, cleanse thou me from my secret faults: keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. *Ps. xix.* 12, 13.

In difficult circumstances.

Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto thee. *Ps. cxliii.* 8.

Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me. *Isa. xxxviii.* 14.

For a friend.

The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day. 2 *Tim. i.* 18.

Before prayer.

Lord, teach us to pray. *Luke xi.* 1.

Quicken us and we will call upon thy name. *Ps. lxxx.* 18.

Before reading the scriptures.

Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. *Ps. cxix.* 18.

Going to church.

How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord:

my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. *Ps lxxxiv.* 1, 2.

We will go into his tabernacle; we will worship at his footstool. *Ps. cxxxii.* 7.

Entering God's house.

This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. *Gen. xxviii.* 17.

On hearing the scriptures.

Sanctify us through thy truth: thy word is truth. *John xvii.* 17.

After worship.

The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the Sanctuary. 2 *Chron. xxx.* 18, 19.

Occasional ejaculations.

O Lord, be gracious unto us, we have waited for thee. *Isa. xxxiii.* 2.

Father, glorify thy name. *John xii.* 28.

Lord, save us, we perish. *Matt. viii.* 25.

Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me. *Mark x.* 47.

Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. *Luke v.* 12.

Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. *Mark ix.* 24.

Lord, help. *Matt. xv.* 25.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

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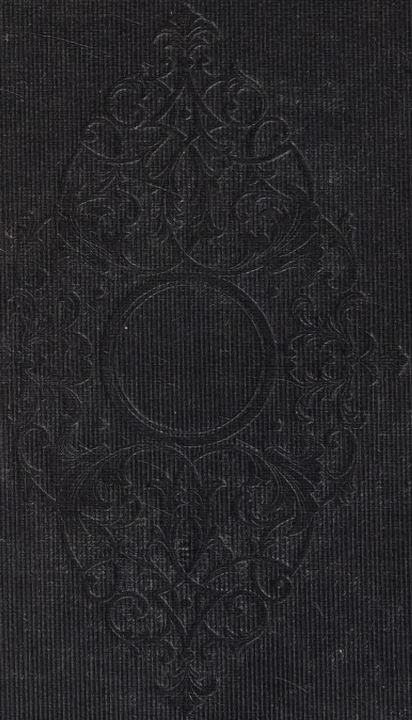
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